BRILL

MEDIEVAL ENCOUNTERS 28 (2022) 33–71

Medieval
Jewish, Christian and Muslim Culture
Encounters
in Confluence and Dialogue

brill.com/me

The "Jew in the Latrine": Exploring the Transmission of an Early German Anti-Jewish Narrative

William C. McDonald
Professor, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA
wcm@virginia.edu

Abstract

An anti-Jewish short narrative, here labelled the "Jew in the Latrine," was very popular in the Middle Ages and early modern period, appearing in a range of genres in Latin and the vernacular. A Jew falls into a sewer on the Sabbath day and, fearing desecration, neither extracts himself nor permits his extraction from the muck. Vexed over Jewish Sabbath prohibitions, a Christian authority compels the Jew also to remain in the sewer over the Christian Sabbath. This anecdote was intended both to reinforce the trope identifying Jews with filth and excrement, and to ridicule the place of the Law within Judaism itself. Exemplars of the "Jew in the Latrine" within the German cultural region, though bountiful, are researched sketchily. This paper aims to provide the first systematic assessment of these. Important findings are the crucial role played in the transmission of the tale by the circle of the Reformer Philip Melanchthon, and the omnipresence of the city of Magdeburg and the intervention of its archbishops in adjudicating the case of the "Jew in the Latrine."

Keywords

anti-Jewish polemic – Sabbath – medieval and early modern Germany – Protestants – fecopoetics – excremental libel

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2022 | DOI:10.1163/15700674-12340122
Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

1 Introduction: "Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep It Holy" (Exodus 20:8)

"A story," Merrall Llewelyn Price notes, "linking Jews to excrement is that of the Jew of Tewkesbury (England)":

> It is the purportedly historical account of a Jew who, one Saturday in 1258, falls into a latrine but, as the day is the Jewish Sabbath, refuses offers to pull him out, because the action would break the Sabbath. When Richard de Clare, count of Gloucester, hears about this, he refuses to allow the Jew to pull himself out on the following day either, citing respect for the Christian Sabbath, and so the Jew dies in the latrine.[1]

This anecdote (henceforth "the Jew in the Latrine"), widely present in Latin and in the vernacular from the twelfth century onward, is one of the best-researched and most widely anthologized anti-Jewish *exempla*.[2] Variants were catalogued already in the nineteenth century;[3] it is found in prominent collections of motifs and *exempla*;[4] and an Internet-version, under the name "The Imprisoned Jew at Magdeburg," is identified as one of the core "Anti-Semitic

1 Merrall Llewelyn Price, "Medieval Antisemitism and Excremental Libel," in *Jews in Medieval Christendom*, ed. K.T. Utterbach and M.L. Price (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), 185. On this version of the tale, see Joe and Caroline Hillaby, "Tewkesbury, Gloucs.," in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Medieval Anglo-Jewish History* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 367–368.

2 See Anthony Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book. English Antisemitisms*, 1350–1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23–53; and Albert Wesselski, *Mönchslatein. Erzählungen aus geistlichen Schriften des XIII. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Heims, 1909), 100.

3 Moritz Güdemann, *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Magdeburg* (Breslau: Verlag der Schletter'schen, 1866), "Über die angebliche Affaire des Juden Salomo zu Magdeburg i. J. 1266," 29–33. See also M. Wiener, "Zur Geschichte der Juden in der Residenzstadt Hannover, nebst einer Einleitung, die früheste Niederlassung der Juden in den welfischen Landen betreffend," *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Juden und des Judenthums* 1 (1860): 167–216 at 209–211; and (No author), "The Jew of Tewkesbury," *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries* 1, Nos. CCLXXXV and CCCXVI (1879–1881): 264–265; and 306–307.

4 Frederic C. Tubach, *Index Exemplorum. A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1969), 220 ("Jew in Sewer:" 2795: "A Jew falls into a sewer on Saturday and will not let himself be pulled out because it is the Sabbath. The king, a Christian, will not permit him to be pulled out on Sunday."); and Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1957), IV: 131. (The Rescuers' Sabbath, J1613: "A Jew, fallen into a pit, refuses to be rescued on Saturday, his Sabbath. The next day, he calls for help but the Christians refuse to rescue him on Sunday, their Sabbath.")

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

Legends."[5] Despite the precise chronology given for the English story, no such event took place in Tewkesbury in 1258.[6] Nor is England the only locale claimed for the anecdote in the Middle Ages and early modern period.

The German cultural area is well-represented by authors who commonly place the story in the city of Magdeburg, where the local archbishop holds sway over the Jew trapped in excrement. German exemplars of the Jew in the Latrine, which appear first in the thirteenth century and extend into the Reformation period and Luther's circle, have heretofore not been systematically cataloged and commented on. The aim of this paper is to fill that gap in scholarship. So ubiquitous is the anecdote that we cannot claim to have uncovered all the German records, but the most important ones appear in these pages. A finding of consequence is the explanation for the recurrent linkage of the narrative with Magdeburg. Modern scholarship places the Jew in the Latrine in the context of Christian anti-Jewish "excremental libel."[7] Our study affirms that conclusion and hopes, by sketching the variations of the tale, more accurately to measure its resonance.

The Jew in the Latrine is a protean fable, holding a shifting number of characters, geographies, and narrative threads. Authors mark the incident with a date, as seen in the Jew of Tewkesbury, but the chronology is very fluid, ranging from 1258 to circa 1500.[8] Three story-blocks appear consistently. These are a Jew's descent into a latrine; his refusal to rise out of the muck on the Sabbath; and the indignant intervention of a Christian, who lodges a retaliatory claim that the Christian Sabbath is worthy of equal reverence. The remaining details are mutable. For example, sometimes the protagonist bears a name (Salomon); either a Christian or a Jew passes by the sewer; at times, the victim volunteers to

5 D.L. Ashliman, "Anti-Semitic Legends, 1995–2005." https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/antisemitic.html#privy.

6 Hillaby, "Tewkesbuy, Gloucs.," 367: "The only record of a Tewkesbury Jew in the plea rolls of the exchequer is in 1277." See also Anthony Bale, "Framing Antisemitic *Exempla*. Locating the Jew of Tewkesbury," *Mediaevalia* 20 (2002): 19–47. Earlier scholars strove to validate our anecdote as historically verifiable, for example, Wolfgang Menzel, *Geschichte der Deutschen bis auf die neuesten Tage*, 6th edition (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1872), 1: 599 (footnote).

7 Price, "Medieval Antisemitism and Excremental Libel," 185 (in reference to the Jew in the Latrine). See, recently, David I. Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders. Nature and the Supernatural in Medieval Ashkenaz* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 199.

8 Into the seventeenth century, authors had a vague sense of the chronology of the Jew in the Latrine. For example, the Protestant theologian Johann Piderit (d. 1639), in his *Chronicon Comitatus Lippiae* (Rinteln an der Weser, 1627), 518, mis-dates by a century the tenure of Archbishop Conrad of Magdeburg, the purported ecclesiastical authority who determines the fate of the Jew in the mire. Piderit gives credence to the tale, dating it before 1377. Conrad actually ruled from 1268–1277. See F. Varnhagen, "Aus dem Mittelalter. Anekdote und historische Berichtigung," *Kunst- und Wissenschaftsblatt* (1823), 73–76 at 73.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

remain in the latrine; at other times, his fellow Jews seem more committed than he to the stay in the pit; sometimes Christians are the rescuers; and the Jew is able to escape death. (Ignoring the aura of death and punishment that accompanies the tale and its consistent moralization, an early researcher classified the anecdote as a "joke.")[9] In some exemplars, the Christian who commands the Jew to remain in the cesspit over Sunday is a civil arbiter, while in others an ecclesiastical official pronounces judgment on the Jew. A French monarch is the arbiter in a fourteenth-century French version that Joan Young Gregg entitles "A Jew Falls into a Stinking Pit."[10] And the pope, of all people, enters the anecdote as judge over the Jew in a sixteenth-century account.[11]

The Jew in the Latrine is straightforward religious polemic, with the specific aim of exposing the supposed slavish obedience of Jews to Sabbath prohibitions, and with the larger aim of ridiculing the Mosaic Law itself.[12] Its origin is scriptural, the debates between Christ and the Pharisees over the

9 H.L.D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1883), I: 249: Speaking of Cotton, Cleopatra D, viii (14th century). Similarly, Georg H.T. Liebe, in *Das Judentum in der deutschen Vergangenheit* (Leipzig: E. Diederichs, 1903), 60, suggests that the tale borders on the joke, or jest (*Scherz*), and associates it with the pranks of Till Eulenspiegel. See also John Willock, who classifies the tale as an example of *Legal Facetiae. Satirical and Humorous* (London: London Literary Society, 1887), 261, claiming that "Salomon, a Jew Attorney (!) fell into a lake (!) at Tewsbury [sic]." Willock's version illustrates the extreme mutability of the Jew in the Latrine, which is nourished not by history, but by invective.

10 Joan Young Gregg, *Devils, Women, and Jews. Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories* (New York: SUNY Press, 1997), 215. Cf. J.A. Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts of the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1910), III: 180 (reference to King Louis and the *Gesta Romanorum*).

11 Joseph ha-Kohen, *Emek habacha* (Vale of Tears), ed. M. Wiener (Leipzig: O. Leiner, 1858), 44. It could be that ha-Kohen (1496–1577?), physician and historian, writing in Hebrew, was referring to a high prelate, for instance, an archbishop, but the German rendering by Wiener is *Papst* (pope). See Wiener's footnotes 176a and 257, pp. 178–179 and 204–205, respectively. Karin Almbladh, in: *Joseph Ha-Kohen, Sefer 'Emeq ha-bakha'* (*The Vale of Tears*). *With the Chronicle of the Anonymous Corrector* (Ph.D. Diss, Uppsala University, 1981), 52, contends that "'Pope' [is] here the translation of *episcopus* (*Magdeburgensis Conradus comes de Sternenberg*)."

12 A further thrust of the Jew in the Latrine is criticism for failure of the Jews to respect the scriptural admonition to love one's neighbor (Leviticus 19:17). One bit of doggerel from the sixteenth century attempts to make that point: *Wer seim nechsten nit wil beystan, Wenn er im gehelffen kan, Muß hernach lon underwegen, Weils andern auch ist ungelegen* (If, though able, you aid your neighbor not, someday, in need, no aid will be your lot.). Cited in: *Wendunmuth von Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof*, ed. H. Österley (Tübingen: Litterarischer Verein in Stuttgart, 1869), vol. 1, no. 33, p. 483. A Jewish response to biblical passages on the Sabbath and "Yeshua of Nazareth's" rebuke of the Pharisees (*Perushim*) appears in *Yudisher Theriak. An Early Modern Yiddish Defense of Judaism*, ed. and trans.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

proper observance of Sabbath day. The key passage is Christ's challenge to the Pharisees, involving a pit, a helpless creature, and rescue on the Sabbath: *What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep. Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days*. (Matthew 12:11–12; Cf. Mark 2; Luke 6 and 14; John 5).[13] By analogy, just as the Pharisees of the Bible, fearing profanation of the Sabbath, refuse to perform an act of compassionate rescue from a pit on that day, so too the Jews in our anecdote resist saving a fellow believer who falls into a pit. The full power of the Law is demonstrated in the story when the entrapped Jew, under its sway, refuses either to lift himself out of the trench, or to have others help him out. The moral is that all Jews approach the Sabbath as the Pharisees of old, placing the Law above common sense, compassion, and human life.[14]

The narrative perspective of the Jew in the Latrine is, to borrow a formulation of Yaacov Deutsch, "Judaism in Christian Eyes."[15] Recent scholarship has shown how the refracting lens of Christianity influenced the representations of Jews and Judaism in the Middle Ages and early modern period.[16] Burnett speaks of a "distorted mirror."[17] Readers expecting a non-ideological view of Jewish "daily rituals, life cycle events, such as birth and death, and communal days, such as the Sabbath," received, instead, a skewed depiction of the same by

---

by Morris M. Faierstein (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016), 47. The *Theriak* is from 1615.

13 In the Vulgate, *fovea* is the word chosen for "pit/dike" (Matthew 12:11). *Fovea* appears again in Christ's parable regarding the blind falling into a pit (Luke 6:39). Not by chance, we presume, the first German exemplar cited in this survey, *Mensa philosophica* (see below), employs *fovea* to designate the pit of excrement in which the Jew finds himself: *Quidam ludeus sabbato cecidit in foveam* (A Jew fell into a pit on the Sabbath day).

14 See Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law. Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) regarding the construction of the medieval Jew according to the model of Scripture. Augustine, particularly, influenced what Cohen has characterized as the "sense of the Jew" as essentially stationary (59–65). For a reminder that Christian theologians of the Middle Ages failed to witness Judaism as a dynamic faith, I express gratitude to an anonymous reviewer of this essay.

15 Yaacov Deutsch, *Judaism in Christian Eyes. Ethnographic Jews and Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

16 See, for example, Maria Diemling, "Anthonius Margaritha on the 'Whole Jewish Faith.' A Sixteenth-Century Convert from Judaism and his Depiction of the Jewish Religion," in: *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, ed. D.P. Bell and S.G. Burnett (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006), 303–333. See also, in the same volume, Yaacov Deutsch, "*Von der Juden Ceremonien*. Representations of Jews in Sixteenth-Century Germany," 335–356.

17 Stephen G. Burnett, "Distorted Mirrors. Antonius Margaritha, Johann Buxtorf, and Christian Ethnographies of the Jews," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 25 (1994): 275–287.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

authors actively hostile to Judaism.[18] One thinks, for example, of the writings of the teacher and writer Antonius Margaritha (1490–1537), who treats the rituals and practices of Judaism – the Sabbath among them – with apparent objectivity, but essential distance and alienation. The purpose of Margaritha's book of 1530, *Der gantze Jüdisch Glaub* (The Whole Jewish Faith), was to expose "the treachery of Jews and their subversive rituals of Judaism."[19] Like Margaritha, a former Jew who had converted to Christianity, the adapters of the Jew in the Latrine promote a distorted perspective on Jewish mores, contrasting the praxis and ceremonial life of Judaism with supposedly superior Christian principles of moral conduct.

The distortion of Sabbath restrictions is one example of the effort to caricature and thereby to discredit the Jewish religion. Since the sixth century CE and the Babylonian Talmud, it was widely known that the rescuing of a life does not desecrate the Sabbath.[20] One example is a child who falls into a pit. Because the child's life is in danger, rescue from a life-threatening situation permits – even demands – life-saving action. Placing life over Sabbath prohibitions even has a name: the principle of *pikkuah nefesh doheh Shabbat*. This rule of conduct is absent from the Jew in the Latrine, however. Accordingly, neither the Jew in the pit nor his colleagues acknowledge that life overrides Sabbath regulations. Instead, Christian authors seek to focus on the dictates of Shabbat, thus exposing the supposedly blind devotion of Jews to the letter of Sabbath law.[21] Said reverence for Sabbath precepts leads to the death of the Jew in the pit in several versions of the tale, as noted above, and Martha

18 Michael T. Walton, *Antonius Margaritha and the Jewish Faith. Jewish Life and Conversion in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012), 19.

19 Elisheva Carlebach, *Divided Souls. Converts from Judaism in Germany*, 1500–1750 (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2001), 50. See Anton Margaritha, *Der gantze Jüdisch Glaub* (Franckfurt am Mayn, 1544) http://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11215530-5. The best-known apostate was Johannes Pfefferkorn (1469–1523), notorious for his tract of 1507/08, *Der Juden Spiegel* (Jew's Mirror), in translation by Ruth I. Cape, introduction by Maria Diemling (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011). On Pfefferkorn, see Hans-Martin Kirn, *Das Bild vom Juden im Deutschland des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989); and Avner Shamir, *Christian Conceptions of Jewish Books. The Pffeferkorn Affair* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2011).

20 "Saving a Life on Shabbat," Yoma 84b, in: *The William Davidson Talmud*. https://www.sefaria.org/Yoma.84b.7?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en.

21 For early modern Christian authors, the Jew in the Latrine illustrates Jewish understanding of the desecration of the Sabbath. See, for example, *Critici sacri, sive Annotata doctissimorum virorum in Vetus ac Novum Testamentum*, ed. Henricus et Vidua Theodori Boom, etc. (Amsterdam: Boom, Janssonius à Waesberge, Borstius, à Someren, Wolters, 1698), 7: 421–422. Cf. Cornelius Lapide, *Commentarii in IV Evangelia* (Lyon: Sumptib. Gabrielis

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

Bayless describes that variant: "[He] effectively chooses dung and is therefore condemned to die in it."[22]

Dung and degradation: these are the poles between which the Jew in the Latrine oscillates. It is no accident that the sewer is the staging area for our tale, inasmuch as Judaism, excrement, and foul smells are linked from the earliest times in Christian defamatory rhetoric.[23] "In the anti-Semitic Europe of the Middle ages," Constance Classen writes, "it was believed by many that Jews emitted a reek so horrible that they could only rid themselves of it by Christian baptism or by drinking the blood of a Christian child … The classification of Jews as foul in the West reinforced their association with the foul-smelling Devil."[24] Jews, heretics, and other non-Christians, Katelynn Robinson reminds us, gave forth "the stench of sin," a Christian metaphor for religious transgression and spiritual fetidity.[25] Interestingly, the stench that connotes Jews seems to have a link to the pestilential air in plague texts and manuals. These

---

Boissat & Sociorum, 1638), 1: 256. (The marginal note here states: *Superstitiosa Sabbathi Iudaici observatio*.)

22 Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture. The Devil in the Latrine* (New York/London: Routledge, 2012), 158. Observe that the Jew in the Latrine is traditionally connected to a rhyme highlighting excrement: "*«Sabbata nostra cola, de stercore surgere nolo». «Sabbata nostra quidem, Salomon, servabis ibidem»*". ("I revere our Sabbath. I do not wish to rise from the dung." "Then Salomon will observe our Sabbath in the same place.") Translation by Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*, 42. See H. Breslau, "Zur Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland," *Hebräische Bibliographie. Blätter für neuere und ältere Literatur des Judenthums* 12 (1872): 121–29 at 121 (footnote). Cf. Dorothea Weber, "Ein antijüdisches Epigramm aus dem Mittelalter," *Wiener Studien* 102 (1989): 267–270.

23 One example of this rhetoric is the accusation that Jews eat the excrement of swine. See Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau. A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and its History* (London: Warburg Institute, 1974), 65.

24 Constance Classen, "The Odor of the Other. Olfactory Symbolism and Cultural Categories," *Ethos* 20 (1992): 133–66 at 134 and 159. See also, Francesca Matteoni, "The Jew, the Blood and the Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Folklore* 119 (2009): 182–200 at 190 and 194 ("a supernatural stench"). On the supposed odor of the Jews (*foetor judaicus*), see Stefan Rohrbacher and Michael Schmidt, *Judenbilder. Kulturgeschichte antijüdischer Mythen und antisemitischer Vorurteile* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), 163–164; "Stereotypes of Jews," in: *Medieval Folklore. A Guide to Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs, and Customs*, ed. Carl Lindahl, et al. (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 230; Nicoline Hortzitz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft in der frühen Neuzeit (1450–1700)*. (Heidelberg: Winter, 2005), 630; and Anja Lobenstein-Reichmann, *Sprachliche Ausgrenzung im späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), 38–39; and 193.

25 Katelynn Robinson, *The Sense of Smell in the Middle Ages. A Source of Certainty* (New York/London: Routledge, 2020), 164–165.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

discourses coalesce in dread over corrupt, miasmic air carrying noxious smells that betoken sin and death.[26]

A trope in which the latrine figures centrally accuses Jews of using waste matter as the matrix for imagined crimes.[27] We can cite four examples here. The first, told and illustrated with a picture in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* of Alfonso X, El Sabio (d. 1284), tells the "story of a Jew in Constantinople who, inspired by the Devil, seizes a picture of the Virgin Mary and casts it into a nearby privy, following this insult by evacuating his bowels onto the image."[28] Second, Geoffrey Chaucer's Prioress in the *Canterbury Tales* relates how Jews conspire to hire a murderer to kill a Christian schoolboy and throw the child into a Jewish privy.[29] Third, the English Benedictine monk Matthew Paris (d. 1259) relates the story of the Jew Abraham who "took an image of the Madonna and child, placed it in his privy, and perpetrated a most filthy and unmentionable act upon it day and night and caused his wife to do the same."[30] Finally, Jews supposedly required their Christian wet-nurses to express their milk into a latrine after Easter communion in order to avoid contaminating Jewish children.[31]

---

26 On the corrupt air theory, see Robinson, *The Sense of Smell in the Middle Ages*, 116ff.

27 See Kathy Lavezzo, "The Minster and the Privy. Rereading the Prioress's Tale," *PMLA* 126 (2011): 363–382 at 367, on our anecdote and the general employment of fecal imagery to denigrate Jews. In her monograph *The Accommodated Jew. English Antisemitism from Bede to Milton* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 2016), Lavezzo writes: "Reflecting [the] medieval rejection of waste, the imagined Jews of anti-Semitic writings often employ the privy not only to hide but also [to] perform their anti-Christian aggression" (116).

28 Price, "Medieval Antisemitism and Excremental Libel," 180. See also Albert I. Bagby, Jr., "The Jew in the *Cántigas* of Alfonso X, El Sabio," *Speculum* 46 (1971): 670–88 at 676 (Cántiga 34); See also Vikki Hatton and Angus Mackay, "Anti-Semitism in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 60 (1983): 189–199; and Klaus Schreiner, "Antijudaismus in Marienbildern des späten Mittelalters," in: *Rituale, Zeichen, Bildern. Formen und Funktionen symbolischer Kommunikation im Mittelalter*, ed. U. Meier, G. Schwerhoff, and G. Signori (Köln, 2011), 243–81 at 265–267 (Illustration, 266).

29 Lavezzo, "The Minster and the Privy; and Merrall Llewelyn Price, "Sadism and Sentimentality. Absorbing Antisemitism in Chaucer's Prioress," *The Chaucer Review* 43 (2008): 197–214. See the remarks of Price, "Medieval Antisemitism and Excremental Libel," 181–182: "Perhaps the largest role for privies in Jewish calumniation narratives is as the disposal place for the bodies of Christian children supposedly murdered in Jewish rituals of revenge on Christianity, as in Chaucer's 'Prioress's Tale'."

30 Stephen D. Benin, "Matthew Paris and the Jews," in: *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, ed. D. Assaf (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1990), B.2: 61–68 at 65.

31 Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales. The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 33. Rubin also reports on a legend that a Jew had buried a Eucharistic host in a latrine, 91. We perhaps need to be reminded that the

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

By stumbling of his own accord into the muck, the Jew in the Latrine reverses the narrative sequence of anti-Jewish legend. He does not hurl a Christian, or a Christian object, into a ditch of defilement; he hurls himself into the feces. The very fact that he dwells in odiferous bodily discharge must give us pause, however. His stay there conveys two messages, one rhetorical and the other moral/ethical. The refuse is graphic affirmation of the *locus communis* linking Jews to waste matter. So closely does Martin Luther, for example, identify Jews and excreta, that some speak of the reformer's *Fäkalantisemitismus* (fecal anti-Semitism).[32] At the same time, waste matter, as new studies on fecopoetics have revealed, operates in early literature as a moral and ethical category, where it can betoken sin.[33] To illustrate, Bayless chooses the felicitous phrase

---

excremental libel is not restricted to Christian texts. Scatology, Shyovitz observes in *A Remembrance of His Wonders*, "figures prominently in both Jewish anti-Christian and Christian anti-Jewish polemic" (194). He makes the further point that the "excremental discourse" between the two faiths was conducted in a pattern of reaction and response (esp. 198–199). A Jewish text in question is the *Sefer Hasidim* (Book of the Pious/Pietists), from the early thirteenth century. On this book see Ivan G. Marcus, *Sefer Hasidim and the Ashkenazi Book in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

32 See, for example, Michael Hesemann, "Luther und die Juden," lecture held at the Sommerakademie: "Das Gottes- und Menschenbild Martin Luthers," Gustav-Siewerth-Akademie im August 2016." http://werwarluther.de/luther-und-die-juden. Hesemann is referring specifically to Luther's pamphlet *Vom Shem Hamphoras*. On the polemical language of Luther, see Heiko Oberman, "Teufelsdreck. Eschatology and Scatology in the 'Old' Luther," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19 (1988): 435–450; David G. Singer, "Baptism or Expulsion. Martin Luther and the Jews of Germany," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 44 (2009): pp. 401–408; and Thomas Kaufmann, "Luther and the Jews," in: *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, 69–104. Oberman (as above) points to the "association of the devil with defecation, and the use of feces to combat him" (444). See also Kirn, *Das Bild vom Juden im Deutschland des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts*, esp. 120.

33 See Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture*; and Susan Signe Morrison. *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages. Sacred Filth and Chaucer's Fecopoetics* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Morrison's chapter, "Moral Filth and the Sinning Body. Hell, Purgatory, Resurrection" (25 ff.) is particularly relevant to the topic of excrement as symbolic for human transgression. See also her study, *The Literature of Waste. Material Ecopoetics and Ethical Matter* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); and her essay, supporting the argument for a consideration of Waste Studies, "Waste in Literature and Culture: Aesthetics, Form, and Ethics," in: *Europe Now* (*CES*), https://www.europenowjournal.org/2019/05/06/waste-in-literature-and-culture-aesthetics-form-and-ethics/. As late as the seventeenth century, the association of the Jew in the Latrine and the metaphor of the "Devil's Sewer" is seen, for example, when Bartholomaeus de Barberis [Bartolomeo Barbieri] (1615–1697), the Italian Capuchin preacher and lector, interprets the latrine in the anecdote as the *cloaca diaboli*. For Bartholomaeus, the Jew who refuses to leave the sewer on Sabbath day is the archetypal sinner, choosing to remain in (the excrement of) sin. Cited in *Glossa seu Summa ex Omnibus S. Bonaventurae Expositionibus in S. Scripturam Exacte Collecta* (Lyon, 1688), 222.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

"the mire of perdition" to characterize the physical and spiritual predicament of the Jew in the Latrine.[34] Bayless also comments on the significance of dung, noting that it "represents carnal and worldly sins." (She references Job 2:8, where the protagonist sits on a dung heap.)[35] Sharon Achinstein likewise calls attention to the symbolic associations attached to the Jew in the Latrine: "The anti-Jewish meanings … are all too familiar. With a whiff of *foetor judaicus*, [it] makes a strong correlation between Jew and excrement, pointing to the sewer as the place where a Jew can be found; perhaps he belongs there."[36]

Thus interpreted, the Jew in the Latrine is a little map of spiritual ruin. In Christian eyes, it represents Pharisaical Judaism which, anchored to the slimy soil of legalism and unyielding constraints, wallows in the filth of sin.

34 Martha Bayless, "The Story of the Fallen Jew and the Iconography of Jewish Unbelief," *Viator* 34 (2003): 142–56 at 142. Equally apt is the phrase "the dung pit of error" that Bayless uses in reference to the Jew in the Latrine in her study *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture*, 158. See also Sita Bell, "Anti-Semitic Folklore Motif Index" (MS Thesis, Utah State University, 2009). https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/299 Bell gathers anti-Jewish motifs, prominent among which is the association of Jews, excrement, and the Devil. For example, she cites: "Jews are full of, and wallow in Devil's feces" (49). The sewer and feces occur in Bell's catalog, for example, a "Jewish mother dunks her daughter in a sewer to remove the effects of baptism" (53); and a "Jew eats the feces of a sow" (53). Bell identifies the Jew in the Latrine as one of the anti-Jewish motifs ("Jew falls into a pit and refuses rescue," 50). Regarding the medieval Jewish perspective on fecopoetics and the significance of scatological issues, see the sections "Excrement and the Sacred" (164–171) and "Scatology and Eschatology" (181–189) by Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders*. The Jewish Pietists, he explains, "invested [excrement] with decidedly spiritual significance" (162). Perhaps relevant to the interpretation of the Jew in the Latrine are Shyovitz's findings that Jewish "sacred spaces" needed to be protected from fecal matter (165). Therefore, neither was God's name to be invoked there, nor was Hebrew to be spoken.

35 Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture*, 23 and 144.

36 Sharon Achinstein, "John Foxe and the Jews," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001): 86–120 at 86. Fecal terminology figures prominently in Christian-Jewish polemics. See Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders*, who speaks of "excremental discourse" and "scatological argumentation" (198) in reference to both Jewish anti-Christian and Christian anti-Jewish polemical writings, observes on the Jewish side the association between Jesus and excrement (*Sefer Nitsahon Yashan*; 197–198). Similarly, Rebecca Scharbach (Wollenberg) reminds us that "according to most editions of *Toldot Yeshu*, Jesus … ended (his life) covered in bodily waste … Early rabbinic traditions … suggested that Jesus was doomed to spend eternity immersed in boiling excrement." Cited in: "The Ghost in the Privy. On the Origins of Nittel Nacht and Modes of Cultural Exchange," *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 20 (2013): 340–73 at 369. See also Steven F. Kruger, *The Spectral Jew. Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 172. When describing Christian representations of the Jewish body, Kruger includes the excremental: "The Jewish body is seen as deficient and excessive, fragmented and porous, dirty, bloody, excremental" (13).

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

2 Phases of Reception in the German Cultural Area

The Jew in the Latrine is a pan-European legend, but most exemplars stem from England and Germany.[37] The English versions have received much more scholarly attention than their German counterparts. As said, the present survey aims to help fill that lacuna by collecting and assessing German variants from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.[38] Our guide to the first phase of reception in Germany is Anthony Bale, who writes: "Versions can be found in the thirteenth-century German *Mensa philosophica*; in a homily by Caesarius von Heisterbach; [and] in an early fourteenth-century Latin manuscript from Mainz."[39] All of these are in Latin. We offer here translations of each, the first from the anonymous *Mensa philosophica*, a treatise on dietetics and seemly behavior while dining. The Jew in the Latrine is one of the anecdotes told for the amusement of the Christian reader as an aid for digestion (!):

> Quidam Iudeus sabbato cecidit in foveam. Christianus videns volebat eum extrahere. Noluit Iudeus dicens sabba (tum) non esse violandum. In crastino iterum transivit Christianus, et Iudeus clamavit ut eum extraheret. Respondit: "Dominica est, non possum violare sabbatum meum," Et sic remansit miser.
>
> [A Jew fell into a pit on the Sabbath day. A Christian, seeing this, wished to pull him out, but the Jew did not want this, saying that he did not wish to violate the Sabbath. The Christian came again the next day, and the Jew cried out that he wished to be extricated from the muck. The Christian said, however: "Today is Sunday, and I dare not violate my Sabbath." Therefore, the wretch remained in the trench.][40]

37 Johannes Leusden (d. 1699), a Calvinist theologian, gives us a window on the familiarity of scholars with the Jew in the Latrine when he cites both German and English records in his *Philologus Hebraeo-mixtus*, 3rd edition (Leiden: Jordani Luchtmanni et Guilielmi à Poolsum, 1699), 260.

38 A sketch of the problems of German research appears in Güdemann, *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Magdeburg*, 29–33. An excellent, but unsystematic overview of examples of the Jew in the Latrine is given by Antonio Placanica, "*Cum de latrina lapsum Salomona ruina* (Walther, Initia, 3580 E 4852)," *Maia. Revista di letterature classiche* 42 (1990): 273–286.

39 Bale, *The Jew in the Medieval Book*. p. 32.

40 "De Iudeis," in: *Mensa philosophica*. *Faksimile und Kommentar*, ed. E. Rauner and B. Wachinger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), IV, 15a, p. 124. See W.D. Paden, "Mt. 1352: Jacques de Vitry, the *Mensa Philosophica*, Hödeken, and Tennyson," *The Journal of American Folklore* 58 (1945): 35–47; and Michael Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words. Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 96–97.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

Here the Jew is too stubborn to accept help, allowing the dictates of the Sabbath to override concerns for his own safety and wellbeing. The Christian passerby represents the principles of compassion and reason; this person recognizes Shabbat rituals as stifling restrictions that must be overcome. By forcing the Jew to remain over Sunday in the pit, the Christian extracts punishment for allegiance to outmoded sacred precepts. The Jew is therefore made responsible for his own fate: had he been more flexible, he would not have placed himself at death's door.

The second example is one of so-called miraculous *exempla* by Caesarius (ca. 1180–ca. 1240), a Cistercian prior, who wrote for the edification of novices:

> Determinat enim Lex opera quedam, que non licet fieri in sabbato … Occurrit hic quiddam memorie, quod nostris temporibus in Campania fertur contigisse. Casu Iudeus quidam lapsus est in cloacam. Allati sunt laquei, quibus extraheretur. Quod ille senciens exclamavit: "Sinite hic me iacere, sabbatum est; bene sustinebo usque in diem crastinum." Delatum est verbum ad comitem, qui tunc presens erat. Qui ait: "Per Deum celi, ex quo ibi elegit celebrare sabbatum Dei sui, eciam sabbatum Dei mei illic celebrabit." Sicque sabbatizavit in stercoribus illis usque ad quartum [?] diem.
>
> [The Law defines certain activities which are prohibited on the Sabbath … There comes here to mind a certain event that in our times [early thirteenth century] is reported to have taken place in Champagne [France]. By chance a certain Jew slipped into a sewer. Nooses were brought, whereby he might be drawn out. When he noticed that, he exclaimed: "Let me lie here, it is the Sabbath; I shall surely be able to bear it until tomorrow." Word was brought to the count, who said: "By the Lord God in heaven, since this man chose to celebrate the Sabbath of his God, so now he shall celebrate the Sabbath of my God there." Thus, the Jew passed the Sabbath in mounds of mire – to the fourth day.][41]

41 Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Die Wundergeschichten des Caesarius von Heisterbach* (*Dialogus miraculorum*), ed. A. Hilka (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1933), 1: 158. Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders*, 193, reminds us that Caesarius employs a common trope in medieval exempla, the appearance of the Devil in a latrine. See also Joseph Dan, "Rabbi Judah the Pious and Caesarius of Heisterbach – Common Motifs in Their Stories," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971): 18–27; and Ivan G. Marcus, "Images of the Jews in the Exempla of Caesarius of Heisterbach," in: *From Witches to Witchcraft. Jews and Judaism in Medieval Christian Thought*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 247–256.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

In this version, it is unclear whether Jews or Christians attempt to extricate the unlucky resident of the sewer. The larger point is that he refuses aid and thereby gives the Law precedence over his own life.

The final early German text is found in a collection of *exempla* from the fourteenth century, composed in the Mainz Charterhouse at Michelsberg. The Carthusian scribe titles the anecdote *Miraculum de Sabato* (Miracle of the Sabbath):

> Miraculum de Sabato. Quidam rex habuit Iudeum in carcere qui sabato suo cecidit in cloacam. Hoc audiens rex iussit Iudeum extrahi. "Non hodie" dixit Iudeus "sed cras, quia sabatum nostrum est." Crastina die noluit rex, quia sabatum suum erat. Per Iudeum intelligimus peccatores qui modo nolunt extrahi a cloaca, idest a peccatis. sicut cloaca fetat quia immunda est, sic peccatum fetet. Modo est sabatum nostrum, post mortem sabatum regis, scilicet omnipotentis. Modo possumus resurgere a cloaca per penitentiam ueram; cras, id est post mortem, quando libenter uellemus, tunc non poterimus.
>
> [A king held a Jew imprisoned who fell into a latrine on his Sabbath day. Upon hearing of this, the monarch commanded that the Jew be pulled out. "Not today," said the Jew, "tomorrow, for today is our Sabbath." On the following day the king refused this wish because it was his own Sabbath. In the Jew we recognize sinners who do not wish to abandon their latrine, that is to say, to be extracted from their sins. Sins and a sewer resemble one another, both being unclean. At present we experience our Sabbath, but after our death will appear the Sabbath of the King, the Almighty. Now, owing to true repentance, we can climb out of the sewer; but tomorrow, after death, we shall not be able to – even should we so desire.][42]

This version devotes the entire second half of the tale to an allegorical explanation. (Note that its setting, the Jew as prisoner of an anonymous king, is not further adopted in the German variants of the Jew in the Latrine.) According to the allegory, the Jew represents sinners whose earthbound sin is excrement in God's sight; and the king is Christ, redeemer and savior from the stench of sin. The reader is warned, and enjoined, to make immediate repentance of past misdeeds. In this interpretation, Judaism equates with transgression, here fealty to an outworn conception of the Sabbath. The Christian king not only forces the Jew to recognize the coevality of the Sabbaths. He compels

42 London, British Library, Arundel MS 506, f. 21r.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

the Jew (read: exemplary sinner) to face his own vices. The foremost of these, as becomes clear from the myriad versions of the Jew in the Latrine, is a perverted legalism.

It is revealing that, in the first phase of reception, none of the German authors identifies the story as situated within the German cultural area. In fact, Caesarius places it in France, which is perhaps a reflection on the earliest extant version of the Jew in the Latrine, drawn from the circle of the French poet Hildebert of Lavardin/Le Mans (c. 1056–1133).[43] Geography is therefore not central to the tale in German lands. Nor is the social status of the would-be rescuer. As shown by the *Mensa philosophica*, the Christian is not identified as a civic or ecclesiastical official. It suffices that he is a Christian, and thus has power over the fate of a Jew in need of rescue. All the anecdotes include Sunday, the day to which the entrapped Jew must accord allegiance, if not respect.

The second period of reception is decidedly regional, settling even on a single German city, Magdeburg in Saxony-Anhalt. It comes as no surprise that the decision to fix the locale for the Jew in the Latrine in Magdeburg can be traced to the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* (Chronicle of the Magdeburg Lay Judges), the chief source for the urban-and diocesan history of Magdeburg, composed in the vernacular.[44] By general agreement, this prose chronicle was begun in the decade 1360–1370 by the city official Hinrik (Heinrich) von Lammesspringe (c. 1325–c. 1396), and entries can be dated as late as 1500.[45] The *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* combines local and world history, blending fact with fiction. Memorable is the legendary founding of Magdeburg by Julius Caesar. Equally memorable, it can be argued, is that the chronicler(s) decided to claim the Jew in the Latrine for the city of Magdeburg. It is impossible to determine when, during the composition of the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*, that our anecdote was adopted and translated into German. In any event, the chronicler(s)

43 For example, Bayless, "The Story of the Fallen Jew," 143. Surveying the transmission of the Jew in the Latrine, Bayless reminds us that in the high medieval period "the [prose] version with the widest circulation was that found in the *Gesta Romanorum*" (143).

44 On general questions of research, see Gundolf Keil, "*Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*," in: *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, 2. Aufl., Bd. 5 (1985), 1132–1142; R. William Leckie Jr. "*To vromen der stad: Orosius*. Heinrich von Lammesspringe and the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*," *Euphorion* 85 (1991): 315–341; and Klaus Graf, "Die *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*. Anregungen für die künftige Forschung," *Sachsen und Anhalt* 30 (2018): 131–172.

45 Jana Pacyna, *Mittelalterliche Judenrechte. Norm und Anwendung im Magdeburger Rechtskreis (1250–1400)* (Halle/Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2015), 30–33. See also M. Przybilski, "Magdeburger Schöppenchronik," in: *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, ed. G. Dunphy (Leiden/ Boston: Brill, 2010), 1058.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

situate the Jew in the Latrine in the final quarter of the thirteenth century (1266–1277), a chronology that reflects the general time-period present in the Jew of Tewkesbury and in the rendering by Caesarius von Heisterbach. Authorial agreement on the thirteenth century does not, of course, imply that the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* knew, or drew on these sources.

The location of the Jew of the Latrine in Magdeburg cannot be reduced to mere local patriotism. For centuries, Magdeburg had been an influential archdiocese. The *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* exploits the association of Magdeburg with religious concerns by turning our anecdote into a kind of sacred parable, arbitrated by the highest ecclesiastical authority in the region, the Archbishop of Magdeburg himself. Accordingly, civilian authority holds no sway in interactions with the Jewish community over activities on Sabbath. It is the archbishop who, in our anecdote, compels the Jew to remain in the muck over Sunday, and hence the archbishop who strikes a blow for the co-quality of the Christian Sabbath. The *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* places the Jew in the Latrine, as said, in the thirteenth century, during the incumbency of Count Conrad II von Sternberg as Archbishop of Magdeburg (1266–1277). The tale follows:

> Ok geschach bi dusses biscopes tiden dat ein jode an dem sonavende vel in ein priveten edder heimlicheit. Dem wolden de anderen joden nicht ut helpen, up dat se or vir nicht enbreken des sabbates. De mere quemen vor dem bischop. He bot den joden, se scholden seinen sabbet, den sondach ok viren bi sinen hulden und den ok mit den stinkenden joden nicht unvledigen. Also moste de jode den anderen dach ok in der priveten und in der rachen liggende bliven an hulpe.
>
> [It happened during [Conrad's] tenure, on a Saturday, that a Jew tumbled into a privy, or latrine. The other Jews did not intend to help him, for they wished to keep the Sabbath. When the archbishop learned of this, he commanded the Jews to honor his Sabbath and not to debase that [day] with this stinking Jew. Therefore, the Jew [in the latrine] was required to suffer the punishment of remaining in the privy through the following day, without any kind of assistance.][46]

46 *Die Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*, ed. Karl Janicke, Book II, 1266–1274, 155. On Archbishop Conrad, see George Adalbert von Mülverstedt, "Conrad (II.), Erzbischof von Magdeburg, als Electus," *Geschichtsblätter für die Stadt und das Land Magdeburg* 4 (1869): 428–432.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

This version of the Jew in the Latrine had enormous influence, dictating the parameters of the fable for centuries in the German cultural area. It contains three elements that became authoritative: Magdeburg as the locale; the reigning archbishop as the arbiter of the Jew's stay in the muck; and an episcopal directive regulating the conduct of the entire Jewish community. All Jews are to respect the Christian Sabbath, not just the wretch in the sewer. For that Jew is reserved the trope of the "stinking Jew" (*stinkenden joden*), here in a double sense: the real stench of the feces, as well as the rhetorical, olfactory slander linking Jews to odor and excrement. (The supposed "sullying" of that day, *unvledigen*, is based on *unvlât*, meaning "dirt," "filth," "foulness.") The reference to a disagreeable smell seems intended to make a larger statement about Judaism itself, providing a slander that makes the Jew's stay in the sewer emblematic for a larger, odiferous community in Magdeburg and environs.

In its association with a definable geographical place, the version in the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* reminds us of the English variant mentioned at the beginning of this study, the Jew of Tewkesbury. Both stories link the anecdote to a specific, geographically locatable city; and both situate it in the thirteenth century. The difference is that the English legend is fully fanciful, since the record of Jewish residence in Tewkesbury is first attested in 1277, some decades after the purported fall of a Jew into a privy.[47] However, the presence of Jews in Magdeburg is attested from the tenth century onward, thus making the account in the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* credible within the given time frame.[48] But a major difficulty arises. The chronicler(s) seem to have confused Archbishop Conrad with his predecessor Archbishop Rupert von Querfurt, count of Mansfeld (ruled 1260–1266), whose hostile actions toward Magdeburg Jews are well-documented.[49] (Note that Conrad had served Rupert in administrative tasks prior to serving as archbishop.) In contrast, no anti-Jewish behavior is reliably attributed to Conrad.[50] Rupert's crimes included hostage-taking

47 Hillaby, "Tewkesbury, Gloucs.," p. 368.

48 On the Jewish presence in Magdeburg, see, for instance, Moritz Spanier, *Geschichte der Juden in Magdeburg* (Magdeburg, 1923); and Haim Tykocinski, "Magdeburg," in: *Germania judaica*, ed. M.I. Brann, I. Elbogen, A. Freimann and H. Tykocinski (Tübingen: Mohr, 1963), 1: 163–170.

49 Regarding the reign of Archbishop Ruprecht, see Friedrich Wilhelm Hoffmann, *Geschichte der Stadt Magdeburg* (Magdeburg: E. Baensch, 1845), 1: 183–185; and Ferdinand Albrecht Wolter, *Geschichte der Stadt Magdeburg von ihrem Ursprunge bis auf die Gegenwart* (Magdeburg: Faber, 1845), 55–56.

50 Afforded the opportunity to comment on Conrad's reputation, the bishop's chronicle of Magdeburg, *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgensium* (980–1513), for example, refers not at all to Conrad's anti-Jewish behavior or attitudes. In contrast, the chronicle refers to the negative interaction with Jews of Conrad's predecessor, *Rupertus de Quernvorde*.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

of Jews, extortion of money from the Jewish community, the plundering of Jewish residences, and involvement in the destruction of the Jewish settlement just outside Magdeburg, *Judendorf* (Jews' village). Rupert's anti-Jewish activity in Magdeburg is, literally the stuff of legend. It is referenced, for example, in the fanciful short story "Das goldene Schiff" (The Golden Boat).[51] It thus seems more reasonable to conclude that the chronicler(s) of the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*, writing at least a century after the events of 1261, confounded these two archbishops of Magdeburg, attributing to Conrad the attitudes and biases that Rupert had cultivated.

Due to the prestige of the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*, Archbishop Conrad appears again as the ruling authority in the anonymous *Cronecken der Sassen* (Saxon Chronicle), a vernacular local chronicle published in 1492 (Mainz) and attributed to Hermann Bote (c. 1450–c. 1520), city scribe of Braunschweig. The passage reads:

> In düssem jare wart gekoren de xxii. Ertzebischopp to Meydeborch, unde heyt Bischopp Cord van Sternbarge, unde vvas to voren gevvesen Bischopp Ruprechts Kenseler, he reygerde teyn jare. By dusses Bischoppes tyden vel eyn Jodde up eyn sunnavent in ein privat, dem volden de anderen Jodden nicht dar ut helpen, wente ön was leyde dat se öre fyre dar anbreken, vvente dat was upp ören sabbate. Dut rüchte kam vor den Bischopp, de bot do den Jodden by dem halse dat se den sondach ock scholden fyren gelick dem sabbathe, düt musten de Jodden don, so dat de eyne Jodde in den private in dem stancke moste tvvey nachte unde tvvey dage sitten.
>
> [The 22nd Archbishop of Magdeburg was elected in this year (sic; actually 1266).] His name was Conrad of Sternberg. For a decade previously, he had been Rupert's administrator. During [Conrad's] tenure, a Jew fell into a privy on a Saturday. Since this occurred on the Jewish Sabbath, his fellow Jews, distressed about desecration of their holy day, did not intend

Cited in: *Gesta archiepiscoporum Magdeburgenium*, ed. W. Schum, MGD SS., 14, (1883), 422–423. The consequences of the apparently unfounded charges against Conrad can be seen when the Protestant historian Johann Baumgart (also Pomarius) writes about Conrad: *Er sol den jueden auch sehr auffsetzig* (*sic*) *gewesen sein* (He is said to have been very hostile to the Jews.) Cited in: M. Johannes Pomarius, "Conradus der 23. Ertzbischoff zu Magdeburgk," in: *Summarischer Begriff der Magdeburgischen Stadt Chroniken* (1587) (rpt. Dößel/Saalkreis, 2007), no pagination.

51 W. Leinung and R. Stumvoll, *Aus Magdeburgs Sage und Geschichte* (Magdeburg, 1894), pp. 65–69. The story begins "Unter dem Erzbischopf Ruprecht entstand in Magdeburg eine schreckliche Judenverfolgung, in der fast alle Juden Hab und Gut manche sogar das Leben verloren."

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

> to help him get out. When the (arch)bishop learned of the situation, he bade the Jews, under penalty of death, to celebrate Sunday just like their own Sabbath. This the Jews were forced to do. Hence, the Jew in the privy was left sitting two nights and two days in the stench.][52]

Striking here are the specification and extent of the punishment devised by the archbishop. Whereas in the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* the episcopal command to obey the Christian Sabbath is vague and carries no bodily threat, in the *Cronecken der Sassen*, the intention to extract punishment is plain enough: *by dem halse* (under penalty of death). And this threat is collective, applied to every Jew in Magdeburg. All the Jews, so goes the argument in the *Cronecken der Sassen*, are to suffer the consequences of the archbishop's directive because they fanatically uphold Sabbath practices. Jews barter common sense for blind fealty to the Law, the argument continues, while Christians keep the Sabbath holy with restraint and sound judgment. Regarding observance of the Sabbath, we note that both chronicles advocate ecclesiastical, not civilian adjudication of religious interactions between Christian and Jew. The supreme authority (and ultimate arbiter) is the Archbishop of Magdeburg.

Magdeburg's Archbishop Conrad appears again as the judge over the fate of the Jew in the Latrine and the wider Jewish community when, circa 1500, Albert Krantz (1448–1517), theologian, historian and academic, includes our anecdote in his authoritative chronicle, *Ecclesiastica historia sive Metropolis* (henceforth *Metropolis*).[53] Krantz's innovations are: the use of the word *latrina* for the space in which the Jew is entrapped;[54] the attribution of anti-Jewish feeling to Archbishop Conrad; and a concluding practical application that castigates Jews for following Mosaic Law to the letter. Krantz writes:

> Magdeburgensem Ecclesiam post Rupertum regendam accepit insignis vir, Conradus, natus familia comitum de Sternberge, qui praedecessoris sui cancellariam cum laude gubernabat: praefuitque Ecclesiae per annos

52 Cited according to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, ed., *Scriptorum Brunsvicensia illustrantium, tomus tertius* (Hannover: Nicolai Foerster, 1711), 367. Also cited in: Lib. II, ed. K. Janicke, in: *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte*, VII. Magdeburg, 1 (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1869), p. 155. See Birgit Funke: *'Cronecken der sassen.' Entwurf und Erfolg einer sächsischen Geschichtskonzeption am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Braunschweig: Stadtbibliothek Braunschweig, 2001), 62–76; 150–153.

53 On Krantz and his methodology, see Ulrich Andermann, *Albert Krantz. Wissenschaft und Historiographie um 1500* (Weimar, 1999); and Ernst Schäfer, "Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Albert Krantz," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 10 (1899): 385–484.

54 Before Krantz, the terminology for the pit, or sewer, appears in the German variants: *fovea*, *cloaca*, and varieties of *privat/privet*.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

> decem. Ferunt virum religione ferventem, Iudaeis satis infestum. Iudaeus die Sabbathi incidisse fertur latrinam, unde se non posset eximere. Implorat miserabiliter opem sociorum. Accurrerant, et querula voce testati esse Sabbathum, non licere illis opere manuum exerceri, servaret patientiam in diem posterum, quam primum liceret operari educendum. Innotuit res pontifici, quod pertinaces Iudaei in Sabbatho suo observando fratrem latrina non educerent. Mandavit sub poena capitis, ut qui Sabbathum suum pertinaciter observarent, Sabbathum quoque Christianorum, diem proximam, eadem celebritate servarent. Quid facerent? lmminebat poena capitis, parendum fuit. Sedebat interim Iudaeus in pedore et periculo duobus diebus ac noctibus, ut pertinaciam suam agnoscerent improbi homines, qui occidentem litteram sequuntur et illi pertinaciter inhaerent, non ferentes de facie Mosi tolli velamen, ut quid subtus sit inspiciant.
>
> [Conrad, a man of the illustrious clan of the counts of Sternberg, assumed governance of the church in Magdeburg after Rupert. Conrad had served in Rupert's chancery for a decade. It is said that he was a fervently pious man who rather hated Jews. It is told that on a Sabbath a Jew had fallen into a latrine from which he could not extract himself. Therefore, this Jew cried piteously to his fellow believers for help. They hurried by and affirmed with a lamenting voice that, since it was Sabbath, they were not permitted to raise a hand to help him. He was to wait patiently until the following day, when they could pull him out. The archbishop learned of this matter, namely that the Jews, stubbornly holding fast to their manner of keeping Sabbath, had failed to fetch their brother-in-faith from the latrine. Under deadly threat, (the archbishop) ordered that equal reverence be given assiduously to the celebration of the Christian Sabbath. What could the Jews have done? Facing the death penalty, they were forced to obey. In the meantime, the Jew sat for two days and two nights in the filth – and in danger. This evil people might therefore recognize that they cling, with pertinacity, to a superseded "letter" (of the Law). They fail to realize that the veil has been lifted from the face of Moses, thus making it possible to inspect what had been concealed.][55]

Krantz almost doubles the size of the fable of the Jew in the Latrine, which offers a hint at its place in his theology. The leitmotif of the passage is Jewish

55 A. Crantzii (Krantz), *Ecclesiastica historia sive Metropolis*, lib. VIII, c. 33 (Basel: Oporinus, 1568), 250.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

pertinacity with regard to the observance of the Sabbath, an excessive perseverance supposedly expressing itself as sinful stubbornness (word family: *pertinacia*). Not content with exposing that supposed obstinance, Krantz resorts to vituperation, maligning the Jews as *improbi homines*, a term of broad negative valence, embracing meanings from "wrongly persistent" to "dishonest," and from "morally reprehensible" to "evil." Thus, like the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* and the *Cronecken der Sassen*, Krantz cites the Jew in the Latrine as a negative moral example, holding profound religious truth. Not only do the Jews cling to the Law; they hold firmly to a belief that has been superseded by Christianity. The veil has been lifted, Krantz argues, but the Jews (as in our fable) fail to acknowledge this, arguing over the letter of precepts, even as a believer sinks in feces. For their lack of insight, for their excessive religious zeal, and for their failure to recognize the co-equivalence, even superiority of the Christian Sabbath, Krantz gives the Jews of Magdeburg and the wider world the label of miscreants: *improbi homines*. Since, in the Jew in the Latrine, the Jews act only upon threat of death from a hostile episcopal authority, the sub-text for Krantz is that force is required in Jewish-Christian religious interactions.

Krantz's version of our anecdote was cited for centuries.[56] Its most immediate impact was felt in a few decades when it was adapted in the vastly influential world history and geographical tome *Cosmographia universalis* (1544 ff.), by Sebastian Münster (1488–1552).[57] A Protestant, Münster was a cartographer, historian, ethnographer, teacher, and scholar of Judaism. When treating the city of Magdeburg, Münster includes a version of the Jew in the Latrine that is heavily indebted to Krantz.[58] Because Münster's book was so successful

56 See, for example, Johann Peter Lange (fl. 1648–1689), who includes the Jew in the Latrine in his collection of literary commonplaces, *Democritus Ridens* (Ulm 1689), 492–494; and Friedrich Eberhard Boysen (1720–1800), a Protestant theologian, who cites Krantz as the source in *Allgemeines historisches Magazin*, 3–4 (1768): 39–40.

57 On Sebastian Münster, see Karl Heinz Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster. Versuch eines biographischen Gesamtbildes* (Basel/Stuttgart: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1963); *Sebastian Münster. Briefe. Lateinisch und Deutsch* (Frankfurt/M: Insel, 1964); "Neue Forschungen zu Sebastian Münster," *Beiträge zur Ingelheimer Geschichte* 21 (1971); "Sebastian Münster. Eine Biographie, *Beiträge zur Ingelheimer Geschichte* 46 (2002): 20–26; and „Sebastian Münster (1488–1552). Universalgelehrter und Weinfachmann aus Ingelheim," (Ingelheim: Historischer Verein, 2002).

58 Concerning the influence of Krantz on Münster in respect to ethnology, see Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster. Versuch einer biographischen Gesamtbildes*, 157–158. Cf. Ulrich Andermann, *Albert Krantz. Wissenschaft und Historiographie um 1500* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1990), esp. 279–280. After Münster's death in 1552, his stepson Heinrich Petri, his publisher in Basel, continued to bring out editions of the *Cosmographia universalis* (see below). Since we were unable to examine each edition, it may be that the Jew in the

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

(almost twenty German editions, in addition to publications in Latin, French, Italian and Czech), it served to fix Magdeburg as the locus of the Jew in the Latrine. Münster, as was the custom of the time, does not directly acknowledge his source material, but attention to phraseology illustrates to satisfaction that Krantz' account was the model for Münster's own:

> Anno salutis 1270, episcopus Magdenburgensis Conradus comes de Sternenberg [sic], uir religione feruens, Iudaeis multum fuit infestus. Accidit autem ut Iudaeus quidam die sabbati caderet in latrinam, unde se non posset eximere. Implorat ergo miserabiliter opem sociorum. Accurrunt illi & querula uoce testantur esse sabbatum, non licere illis opere manuum exerceri, seruaret patientiam in diem posterum, quamprimum liceret operari educendum. Innotuit res pontifici, quod pertinaces Iudaei in sabbato suo obseruando fratrem latrina non educerent mandauit sub poena capitis, ut qui sabbatum suum pertinaciter obseruarent, sabbatum quoque Christianorum diem proximum eadem celebritate obseruarent. Quid facerent? Imminebat poena capitis, parendum fuit. Sedebat enim Iudaeus in pedore & periculo duobus diebus ac noctibus.
>
> [In the year of salvation 1270, Bishop Conrad of Magdeburg, count of Sternberg, a man ardent in faith, was of great trouble to the Jews. For it happened that a certain Jew fell in a latrine on the Sabbath, from which he could not climb out. He therefore pitifully begged help from his fellow Jews. They ran to him and protested that it was the Sabbath, when they were not allowed to perform manual labor, but that he should endure until the following day, the soonest that they would be allowed to rescue him. It became known to the bishop that the obstinate Jews, in observing their Sabbath, would not rescue their fellow Jew from the latrine. He ordered, upon pain of beheading, that they who stubbornly observed their Sabbath should also observe the Christian Sabbath with the same solemnity. What should they do? The punishment of beheading was impending; it had to be heeded. So, the Jew sat in filth and danger two days and two nights.][59]

Latrine is absent from some. In any event, it is clear that, for Münster, the story has a firm association with Magdeburg.

59 Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographia universalis Libri VI* (Basel: Petri, 1550), p. 738. English translation by Bayless, "The Story of the Fallen Jew," 145–146. Her rendering of *sub poena capitis*, the phrase that Münster adopts from Krantz, as "beheading," seems too specific. The more general phrase "under deadly/dangerous threat" serves the purpose.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

Münster borrows large portions of Krantz's version. Accordingly, the city of Magdeburg, Archbishop Conrad, Conrad's religious fervor and hostility to Jews (*infestus*), and the term for the sewer itself, *latrina*, are all inspired by Krantz. Münster affixes a year to the story, one in conformity with our other exemplars in the thirteenth century. (His choice of 1270 is mysterious, however.) The major difference in transmission is Münster's elision of Krantz's final sentences, sentiments that are indisputably anti-Jewish. To review, Krantz had concluded his remarks with invective: Jews are *improbi homines*; they cling to an outmoded faith, a religion bound to the letter of the Law; and they fail to realize that Christianity has superseded Judaism. Krantz chooses "pertinacity" (*pertinacia*), a code-word for stubbornness, one of the oldest anti-Jewish canards. But Münster edits out the final sentence of Krantz's anecdote. He thereby omits a frontal attack on the Jewish people as *improbus* (wicked, perverse, persistent), and the Jewish faith as merely a prelude to Christianity. In short, Münster hesitates to cite the Jew in the Latrine as a means to an end, that is to say, for the purpose of ridiculing and excoriating Jews.

Münster composed two versions of the Jew in the Latrine, one in Latin and one in German. His vernacular rendering – which precedes his Latin variant by some six years – follows here:

> Anno domini tausent zwey hundert siebentzig fiel zu Meidenburg ein Jud am sampßtag in ein sprachhauß vnnd als kein Jud jm den selbigen tag herauß helffen wolt do mit der sabbat am feyer nit gebrochen würd müst der arm Jud den gantzen tag im gestanck stecken. Und do das geschrey für den bischoff kam gebot er den Juden bei grosser straff daß sie den nachgänden sontag auch feyreten gleich wie sie den sabbat hatten gefeyert und also müst der elend mensch zwen tag im wüst sitzen.
>
> [In the year 1270 a Jew in Magdeburg fell into a latrine on a Saturday. The poor Jew had to remain in the stench all that day because no Jew dared help him for fear of breaking the Sabbath. When the bishop heard of this, he bade the Jews, on threat of great punishment, to celebrate Sunday, just as they had celebrated their own Sabbath. Therefore, this poor wretch had to spend two days in the muck.][60]

60 Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographia. Beschreibung aller lender durch Sebastianum Münsterum* (Basel: Petri, 1544), 482. Here Münster, uniquely in our survey, chooses the term *sprachhauß*, literally "a place where people converse." The word has a confusing etymology, expressing two opposed meanings: consistory and secret chamber.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

Comparing Münster's two adaptations of our anecdote, one sees immediate differences, the first of which is length. Münster offers a condensed German narrative, one of the shortest in our survey. Regarding content, Münster's German version, related in a straightforward manner, is not only milder in tone; it elicits pity for a "poor Jew" (*arm Jud*), trapped twice, once in excrement and again in the entanglement of religious ritual. Among the striking omissions are the death penalty for the Jews, which Münster replaces with the vague denominator: "under threat of great punishment" (*bey grosser straff*). He also leaves out a reference to Archbishop Conrad's hostility to Jews. No mention of Jewish stubbornness is present. Nor does Münster allow for a wider, negative critique of the observation of the Jewish Sabbath, as in his Latin passage.[61]

In sum, Münster's encounter with the Jew in the Latrine is characterized by a conflicting and inconsistent authorial stance. On the one hand, in the German exemplar he tells the tale in the least possible words, relating a story about a "poor wretch" (*elend mensch*) whose fidelity to the Sabbath has cost him dearly. On the other hand, in the Latin version Münster transmits a Krantzian tale that conveys a significant religious and cultural conflict between Judaism and Christianity. In the Latin text, the Jew in the Latrine becomes a negative parable, encapsulating the supposed perils and folly of Judaism and its practices.

How to reconcile the two versions? We observe that Münster himself did not choose to do so. In subsequent editions of the *Cosmographia universalis*, both versions appear, distinct in nature, one in Latin and the other in German. From this calculatedly disparate transmission, one must conclude that Münster was very conscious of reaching two audiences, one preferring Latin, and the other the vernacular. The Latin version serves two purposes. First, it employs the Jew in the Latrine as a means to criticize Jewish religious practices and to show that Christian authorities have the will and the power to control the Jews through threat of severe force. Second, it assures Münster's influential Latin readership that he was not overly sympathetic to Jews. Sebastian Münster was, after all, one of the most prominent of those scholars known as "Christian Hebraists."[62]

61 Hans Wilhelm Kirchhof, Landsknecht and author of the popular collection of droll stories, fables, and historical anecdotes, *Wendunmuth* (1563), adopts Münster's German version of the Jew in the Latrine. Kirchhof's choice of a heading hints at his perspective: *Ein bischoff zu Magdenburg vexieret die Juden* (An (arch)bishop in Magdeburg torments the Jews). Kirchhoff thus interprets the anecdote as punishment for the Jewish community at large, a critique that he affirms at the conclusion, when he appends four lines of doggerel on the failure to help one's neighbor in times of need. See our note 12.

62 See, for example, Randall C. Zachman, "John Calvin," in: *The Cambridge Companion to Reformed Theology*, ed. P.T. Nimmo and D.A.S. Fergusson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 132–47 at 135. See also Stephen G. Burnett, *Christian Hebraism in*

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

Münster is credited as one of the founders of Semitic studies; he taught Hebrew (John Calvin sent him students); published Jewish biblical commentaries (after 1527); wrote Hebrew grammars; occupied himself with Jewish exegesis, published Hebrew translations of the Gospel of Matthew – and more.[63] To be sure, Münster was capable of anti-Jewish polemic, as Burnett has shown.[64] For the most part, however, Münster was very open to Judaism, so open that his scholarship in Hebraica was placed on the list of condemned books (Roman Index, 1564). As Matthew McLean has said about Münster's attitude to Jews and to the Jewish religion, "he saw no bar to prevent him establishing working relationships with Jews."[65] These relationships foregrounded intellectual exchange, most prominently through a substantial correspondence with Jews.[66]

Because he was occupied with the full spectrum of Jewish affairs, Münster had to beware of allegations of "Judaizing." This charge implied that the accused was imbued with Jewish principles and practices to the extent that conversion to Judaism was possible. Jerome Friedman reminds us that Münster had to attack Judaism occasionally in order to defend himself against such allegations.[67] Read in this light, Münster's Latin version of the Jew in

---

the Reformation Era (1500–1660). Authors, Books, and the Transmission of Jewish Learning (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012).

63 On Münster's relationship with Jews and Judaism, see, for example, Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster. Versuch eines biographischen Gesamtbildes*, 72–76; Erwin I.J. Rosenthal, "Sebastian Münster's Knowledge and Use of Jewish Exegesis," in: *Essays in Honour of J.H. Hertz*, ed. I. Epstein, et al. (London: E. Goldston, 1942), 127–145; and Jerome Friedman, "Sebastian Münster, the Jewish Mission, and Protestant Anti-Semitism," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 70 (1979): 238–259.

64 Stephen G. Burnett, "A Dialogue of the Deaf: Hebrew Pedagogy and Anti-Jewish Polemic in Sebastian Münster's *Messiahs of the Christians and the Jews (1529/39)*," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 91 (2000): 168–190. Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious Studies Department. 45. http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/classicsfacpub/45.

65 Matthew McLean, *The Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster. Describing the World in the Reformation*, 2007 (rpt. Abington, Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2016), 39.

66 See, for example, Moritz Peritz, "Ein Brief Elijah Levitas an Sebastian Münster," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 2 (1894): 252–267. On Levita, see Deena Aranoff, "Elijah Levita. A Jewish Hebraist," *Jewish History* 23 (2009): 17–40.

67 Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony. Sixteenth-Century Christian Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1983), 214. Cf. Burnett, "A Dialogue of the Deaf," 169. See also Adam Sutcliffe, "Hebrew Texts and Protestant Readers. Christian Hebraism and Denominational Self-Definition," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 7 (2000): 319–37 at 323, who mentions Münster and his concerns: "Early Protestant Hebraism was haunted by the danger of the accusation of 'judaising.' Catholic theologians and polemicists did not hesitate to point to Hebraist scholarship as evidence that Protestantism was nothing other than a resurgent Judaism … Hebraists in Basel, Strasbourg and elsewhere also carefully framed their work in terms that explicitly

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

the Latrine is a testimony to his critics; it shows him capable of anti-Jewish polemic. At the same time, however, his failure to transmit Krantz's concluding diatribe against *improbi homines* shows him willing only to frame nuanced criticism against a religion, culture and language (Hebrew) for which he had developed respect and reverence.

The antipode to German authors preceding and succeeding him in the transmission of the Jew in the Latrine is Johannes Pauli (c. 1455–c. 1533), a Franciscan monk who was a member of the Discalced (*Barfüßer*). In a word, he approaches our anecdote from a wholly different perspective, ignoring precedence, and concluding with a laudation of Jewish observances of the Sabbath. He re-images the tale, omitting mention of Magdeburg or of any ecclesiastical figure acting as arbiter of the Jew's fate. It is all too easy to explain his sympathetic treatment of Jews in the story to his family background. Many believe that Pauli was born Jewish, but converted to Christianity. To attribute a sympathy for Jewish Sabbath observances as seen in the Jew in the Latrine to his autobiography would be to trivialize Pauli's remarks, however. In his immensely popular book of stories from 1522, one among which is the tale of the Jew in the sewer, he divides his anecdotes into two categories, Schimpf and Ernst, roughly, "jocoseness" and "earnestness." Our anecdote belongs to the former category. But Pauli's nomenclature is somewhat misleading, in that the reader might get the impression that some stories are meant to be viewed as merely comical, while others as serious. All the stories are moralizing, that is to state, even those dominated by a farcical tone convey a moral application. A case in point is the tale under review, which Pauli places in a section "On the proper honoring and celebration of holidays" (*Von hochzeitlichen festen, wie man sie eret*).[68] Pauli writes:

> Uf einmal kam ein Iud uff ein Samstag in eins Cristen Huß, und wie er es übersahe, das er in ein Sprachhuß fiel oder in ein Prophei, wie man es dan nent. Der Cristen lieff in des Iuden Huß und sagt es seinen Fründen, sie solten im herußhelffen. Einer sprach: „Wir dörffen es hüt nit; es ist hüt unser Sabat und unser Feiertag." Doch gieng einer anhin und wolt es besehen, und da er dar kam, da sprach er: „Wie bistu da hinabkumen?" Der Jud sprach: „Frag nit, wie ich herab sei kumen, frag, wie ich wider

countered any suspicions of judaising. The most straightforward strategy of defense against this accusation was a professed emphasis on the project of Jewish conversation. Sebastian Münster presented his *Mashiach* (1539) as a missionary treatise."

68 A summary of the Jew in the Latrine in Pauli's version is given by Edith Wenzel, "The Representation of Jews and Judaism in Sixteenth-Century German Literature," in: *Jews, Judaism and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, 414.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

hinuß kum." Er sprach: „Morgen so wöllen wir dir herußhelffen." Des Morgens kamen die Juden mit den Leitern und wolten im herußhelffen. Da sprach der Cristen: „Nit, nit, ir armen Juden! Hüt ist unser Feiertag, es sol nit sein. Gestert was es euwer Sabat und euwer Feiertag, hüt ist es unser Sontag und unser Feiertag." Also můst der Jud zwen Tag in dem Dreck und in dem Gestanck ston.

Es ist den Cristen ein Schand, das die Juden ir Gesatz baß halten, dan die Cristen ir Gesatz und besunder den Feiertag halten. Was wir nit an dem Wercktag mögen thůn, das richten wir an dem Feiertag uß. Die gantzen Wochen sitzen wir und wercken, an dem Sontag spilt man und sufft, und laufft den Hůren nach und in die Dörffer und heischen Schuld, und man fürt mit dem Karren und mit den Wägen als wol an dem Feiertag als an dem Wercktag. Und so das die Juden und Heiden sehen, so werden sie geergert und werden nit Cristen; wan wir mit Worten unsern Glauben loben und riemen, wie gůt und wie gerecht er sei, und erfüllen in aber nit mit den Wercken. Es sein auch nit Feiertag gnůg, als wol als Edler, Juden, gemeine Metzen und Pfaffen; wan man mecht sunst kein gůten Montag, wan die Woch gantz ist, und dem Heiligen, der da heißt Fastnacht, drei Feiertag oder etwan zehen Feiertag.

[Once, on a Saturday, a Jew came to a Christian's house. The Jew accidently fell into a latrine – some call it a privy. The Christian ran to the Jew's domicile, telling his friends that they should fish him out. One Jew spoke up, explaining that they dared not do it because it was Saturday, their Sabbath. However, a Jew went to the scene in order to witness things for himself, asking how the man in the pit had arrived there. The answer was: "Don't ask me how I got here; just tell me how I can get out." His friend said that on the morrow he would help him extricate himself. In the morning the Jews came with ladders and wanted to help him get out. Thereupon, the Christian said: "No, no, you poor Jews! Today is our Sabbath. Just as yesterday was your holy day, today is ours." The Jew therefore had to remain for two days in the excrement and stench.

Christians should be ashamed that the Jews keep their precepts – especially their holidays – better than Christians do. Whatever we don't wish to do on workdays, we do on saints' days. All week long we devote to labor, and on Sundays we play and carouse, running after whores, chalking up debts, and travelling in carts to the villages on Sundays – as if Sunday were any day of the week. Jews and pagans cast a disgusted eye on these happenings. They'll never convert to Christianity because we commend and boast about our faith with words, but not with good

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

> works. (For Christians) there just don't seem to be enough holidays – even though their number exceeds those of nobles, Jews, whores, and clerics. (Holidays are so popular) that people add Mondays to their number. Carnival can even last ten days.][69]

At the conclusion of the Jew in the Latrine, when Pauli mentions Jews, whores, and clerics, an interpretive crux arises on the basis of punctuation and nominalization in two transmissions of the text. One edition conceives of *edler* (high-born, noble) as an adjective for Jews, thus the phrase would read: the number of holidays "exceeds those of noble Jews, whores, and clerics."[70] The other reading, which we have adopted, interprets *Edler* as a plural genitive substantive (*genetivus materiae*), therefore rendering Pauli's passage as: the number of holidays "exceeds those of nobles, Jews, whores, and clerics."[71] This second reading, ironic without being hostile to the Jewish community, squares both with the syntax of the passage and with the tenor of Pauli's remarks throughout. He employs the Jew in the Latrine to commend observant Jews for their celebration of the Sabbath, while faulting Christians for their Sabbath practices.

In the light of Pauli's willingness to cite observant Jews as a model of seriousness and the proper attitude toward keeping the Sabbath holy, it is perhaps not surprising that his interpretation of our narrative had little overt impact. In addition to lauding the Jewish veneration of the Sabbath, he universalizes the narrative, in the spirit of the earliest German versions. Pauli removes the story from Magdeburg and the arbitration of its archbishops, choosing to set the tale at an indeterminate locus, at an unspecified time. These changes were not popular with succeeding authors and anthologists. One response of the latter group is truncation. An anthology, for instance, removes the moral that Pauli had appended, thereby forgoing censure of Christians and praise of Jews.[72] But the question arises whether other variants in this survey permit implicit readings of admiration for the commitment of Jews to their faith, coupled with censure for the failure of Christians to implement Christ's compassionate Sabbath pronouncements.[73] A definitive answer regarding autho-

69 *Johannes Pauli Schimpf und Ernst*, ed. Johannes Bolte (Berlin: Stubenrauch, 1924), 1: 233.

70 Johannes Pauli, *Schimpf und Ernst*, ed. H. Oesterley (Stuttgart, 1886), 237.

71 *Johannes Pauli Schimpf und Ernst*, ed. Johannes Bolte, p. 233.

72 *Schimpf und Ernst. Von Bruder Johannes Pauli. Ausgewählt und sprachlich erneuert* von H.A. Junghans (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam, 1880), 135–136.

73 For the suggestion of a possible counter-textual reading, namely that, against the intent of the teller, it is possible to appreciate that Jews are committed to their faith in ways that Christians are not, I thank an anonymous reviewer of this study.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

rial intention – and reader perception – seems out of reach. The very fact that the question can be posed, however, is revealing, illustrating, as it does, that the protean nature of the tale is certainly not restricted to dramatis personae or geographical settings, but extends to theological interpretation. Pauli's reading was soon countered by an influential circle that reclaimed the Jew in the latrine for Magdeburg, under episcopal arbitration. This group was led by Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560), who, in the re-telling of the tale, slanders the trapped man's Jewish compatriots as impudent because they expect, and request that Christians might pull their fellow Jew from the muck.[74] The dominant theme of these Melanchthonian versions is Jewish inflexibility in respect to honoring their Sabbath, a supposed rigidity that begs for a Christian response. Additionally, Melanchthon and his followers summon a new witness among the archbishops of Magdeburg, Ernst II of Saxony (ruled 1475–1513).[75] He is the forbidding voice in the anecdote, the judge and jury of the Jew in the sewer.

Melanchthon cites the Jew in the Latrine within the context of an exegesis of Luke 14, concerning Sabbath observance. This is the chapter addressing the propriety of rescue from a pit on the Sabbath day, and the context surely brought our anecdote to Melanchthon's mind. He relates it, as transmitted in a postil by an adept, Christoph Pezel (1539–1604), who was theologian, professor, and editor of Melanchthon's *Loci theologici*:

> In urbe Magdeburg Iudaeus inciderat in cloacam, et quidem in ipsorum Sabbato: venerunt Iudaei ad Magistratum, et petiverunt, mandari aliquibus Christianis in urbe, lictoribus, aut aliis ministris publicis, ut extraherent eum. Episcopus miratus impudentiam, quaerit: quare vultis extrahi eum a nostris? quia, inquiunt, nos servamus Sabbatum: Episcopus inquit: Et ego prohibebo meis omnibus, ne in hac re vel hodie, vel cras faciant, quod petitis: Hodie non debet fieri, quia est vestrum Sabbatum; cras prohibebo fieri, quia est nostrum Sabbatum. Ita cogebantur extrahere ipsi eum, ne periret. Accidit hoc sub Ernesto Episcopo Magdeburgensi, Duce Saxoniae.

74 Regarding Melanchthon's attitude toward the Jews, see Timothy J. Wengert, "Philip Melanchthon and the Jews. A Reappraisal," in *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, 105–135. Wengert, 119, notes that Melanchthon was critical of Jewish Sabbath-keeping.

75 See a general introduction to the activities of Archbishop Ernst, in particular his patronage of the arts, by Markus Leo Mock, *Kunst unter Erzbischof Ernst von Magdeburg* (Berlin: Lukas, 2007). Cf. Wolter, *Geschichte der Stadt Magdeburg*, 147–148.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

> [In the city of Magdeburg, a Jew had fallen into a latrine on the Jewish Sabbath. Jews came to the magistrate, begging that Christian officials might authorize the removal of the Jew. The Archbishop was amazed at this impudence and asked: "Why do you want Christians to do this work?" "Because," they responded, "we must respect our Sabbath." The Archbishop replied: "I forbid all my servants to intervene in this situation, today or tomorrow. Since you can't [aid this man in the sewer] today because it is Sabbath, I will forbid [like aid] tomorrow, because it is our Sabbath." Therefore, [the Jews] were forced to extract him themselves – in the event that he was still living. This all occurred during the tenure of Archbishop Ernst of Magdeburg, Duke of Saxony.][76]

Melanchthon's adaptation of the Jew in the Latrine, which Heinz Scheible characterizes as malicious (*boshaft*),[77] achieved wide circulation through its appearance in the book *Jocorum atque seriorum* (1600 ff.), by the legal scholar and diplomat Otto Schwartzmann, writing under the pen-name Otto Melander (1571–1640).[78] Melander, who had studied in Wittenberg, converted to Catholicism. He titles the story *De Sabbatis quisbusdam*, copying it whole from Melanchthon, whose debt he acknowledges.[79] Melander, by transmitting Melanchthon's closing words (*Accidit hoc sub Ernesto Episcopo Magdeburgensi, Duce Saxoniae*), affirms the re-positioning of our anecdote near the year 1500, during the incumbency of Archbishop Ernst. Melanchthon chose Ernst over Conrad, thus ignoring the authority of precedence, for reasons that we must deduce. One explanation is that he wished to make the Jew in the Latrine

76 Philip Melanchthon, "Postilla Melanthoniana," in: *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. H.E. Bindseil. (Braunschweig: Schwetschke & Sohn, 1856), CR 20: 556–557 (= *Dominica XVII. Post Trinitatis. Evangelium Luc.* 14, pp. 533–570) In 1594–1595 Pezel collated and published a collection of Melanchthon's homiletical material, often referred to as the *Postil*. See Georg Buchwald, "Zur Postilla Melanchthoniana," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 21 (1924): 78–89; Timothy J. Wengert, "Philip Melanchthon on Bible Translation and Commentaries," *Lutheran Quarterly* 33 (2019): 26–45 at 28; and H. Ashley Hall, *Philip Melanchthon and the Cappadocians. A Reception of Greek Patristic Sources in the Sixteenth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 94. Wengert, "Philip Melanchthon and the Jews," 119, cites another version of the anecdote, as given in the CR 20: 539 (= *Scripta historica*, No. LXXVIII).

77 Heinz Scheible, "Reuchlins Einfluß auf Melanchthon," in: *Melanchthon und die Reformation. Forschungsbeiträge*, ed. G. May and R. Decot (Mainz: von Zabern, 1996), 84 (136).

78 See the Essay "Melander's Joco-Seria," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 133 (1883): 267–276 (No author listed).

79 Otto Melander, *Jocorum atque seriorum* (Schmalkalden, 1611), p. 90. Melander cites Christoph Pezel (see our note 71) as editor of Melanchthon's version of the Jew in the Latrine in this manner: *D. Pezelius parte quarta postil. Mel. Pag. 188.*

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

contemporary to his audience. In other words, he sought greater immediacy and relevance. But his choice of an arbiter could hardly be more controversial, since Ernst was the fiercest anti-Jewish archbishop in the early history of Magdeburg.[80] Ernst's reputation leads us to conclude that theology and the treatment of Jews in a German urban setting, as expressed in the Jew in the Latrine, were motivating factors for Melanchthon.

Musings on the proper observance of the Sabbath, as said, provide Melanchthon's frame for the citation of the Jew in the Latrine. He debates the precepts and dictates of the Sabbath, specifically the labors and tasks (*opera*) permitted on that day in Christianity and Judaism. The story of the Magdeburg Jew in the pit helps Melanchthon subtly to equate the Jews of Archbishop Ernst's day with the Pharisees, who fail to see the wisdom of Christ's challenge to Sabbath restrictions.[81] Seen in this way, the Jew in the Latrine is Melanchthon's prime example of the perverted reverence for rules, regulations, and requirements in Judaism. To this supposed pharisaical attitude toward the keeping of the Sabbath day, Melanchthon adds the trope of Jewish impudence (*impudentia*). In his version of our anecdote, the Jews of Magdeburg are guilty of insolence, a supposedly shameless expectation that the non-Jews of the town might aid in the rescue of a Jew in the muck. The charge of effrontery stems, in the Jew in the Latrine, from Archbishop Ernst, who is severe and hostile towards the Jewish community. Prohibiting any offer of Christian intervention, this prelate compels the Jews of Magdeburg to extract their fellow believer. They alone, so the subtext reads, can sully themselves with feces.

Melanchthon's version of the Jew in the Latrine has an ominous tone, conveyed in one way by the revival of the specter of the Jew's death in the sewer: *ne peririt* (in the event that he was still living). The decision to enthrone Ernst as arbiter of the trapped Jew's fate is another portent of harm. In 1493, shortly before Melanchthon's birth, Ernst had expelled all the Jews from Magdeburg and environs. He then ordered former Jewish buildings to be transformed into shrines to the Virgin Mary. Next, Ernst sought to influence

80 Still authoritative for Archbishop's Ernst's actions against the Jewish community in and around Magdeburg is August Erhard, "Das Judendorf bei Magdeburg, und des Erzbischofs Ernst zu Magdeburg Judenverfolgung im Jahre 1493," *Allgemeines Archiv für die Geschichtskunde des preussisschen Staates* 1 (1830): 318–329.

81 That Melanchthon can equate the Jews of his day with the Pharisees of Scripture is concordant with the research of Jeremy Cohen on the construction of the medieval Jew. See Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law. Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Augustine, particularly, influenced what Cohen has characterized as the "sense of the Jew" as essentially stationary (59–65). For a reminder that Christian theologians of the Middle Ages failed to witness Judaism as a dynamic faith, I express gratitude to an anonymous reviewer of this essay.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

his ecclesiastical peers and those in authority in neighboring areas to follow his lead. Melanchthon does not openly advocate Ernst's harsh measures; but his documented ambivalence towards the Jewish community permits the interpretation that Melanchthon admired Ernst sufficiently to make him the hero of the Jew in the Latrine.[82] In the tale, Ernst emerges as the model prelate, a man able to recognize, and deal with pharisaical conduct that places reverence for the Law over common sense. He is the standard for imitation when confronted with intractable Jewish behavior. Ernst is firm to the point of severity in his dealings with Jews; he favors reason over adherence to the letter of the Law; and he keeps Jews and Christians apart from each other. It is ironical that Melanchthon's exemplary official is a Catholic office-holder. But the larger point is the attitude of the Christian community (as represented by Archbishop Ernst) towards the Jewish Law.

The attempt by Melanchthon to make the Jew in the Latrine contemporary had significant impact, serving as a template for variants of the tale in Latin and in the vernacular. We have already cited the exemplar by Melander. Each of these versions situates the tale in Magdeburg; and each mentions Archbishop Ernst, directly or indirectly. An example of Melanchthon's influence is shown when his pupil Johannes Manlius (Menlein, fl. 1562–1605), re-works his mentor's version, under the heading *De lege* (Concerning the Law).[83] Manlius here collects and transmits theological anecdotes and commonplaces by Melanchthon, one of which is the tale under review on keeping the Sabbath day holy:

82 Regarding Melanchthon's ambivalence toward Jews and Judaism, see Christopher J. Probst, *Demonizing the Jews. Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 45. On the one hand, Melanchthon was willing, in the presence of princes, to refute false charges of Jewish desecration of the host, and was able to influence the easing of restrictions on Jews in Saxony and Brandenburg. But on the other, Probst notes: "Despite Melanchthon's important contributions to Jewish safety … early in 1543 he would send a copy of Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* to [Landgrave] Philipp of Hesse, along with a 'mild recommendation' of its contents. Despite being uncomfortable at least with the violent tone of many of Luther's later writings, he did not repudiate them" (45). See also Thomas Kaufmann, "Luther and the Jews," *Antisemitism Studies* 3 (2019): 46–65 at 46., on Melanchthon's enthusiastic dissemination of *On the Jews and Their Lies*.

83 On this version, see Scheible, "Reuchlins Einfluß auf Melanchthon," 84 (136). See also Ludwig Geiger, "Die Juden und die deutsche Literatur," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* 2 (1888): 308–74 at 353; Matthias Simon, "Johann Manlius, der erste Herausgeber von Melanchtonbriefen," *Zeitschrift für bayerische Kirchengeschichte* 24 (1955): 141–149; and Ian Maclean, "Melanchthon at the Book Fairs," in: *Learning and the Market Place. Essays in the History of the Early Modern Book* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 121–122.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

> Accidit Magdeburgi, ut die sabbathi Iudaeus in cloacum incideret, ibi Iudaei tanti faciebant suum sabbathum, ut ipsum eo die extrahere nollent. Re delata ad episcopum Magdeburgensem Ernestum inquit: Cum Iudaei tanti faciant suum sabbathum, ut hominem ex cloaca extrahere nolint, ergo etiam nostrum sabbathum tanti faciamus, ac prohibuit ne die Dominico Iudaeus extraheretur. Ita opertuit illium Iudaeum biduum manere in cloaca. Tertio tandem die extractus est.
>
> [It happened at Magdeburg that a Jew fell into a sewer on the Sabbath. Because it was Sabbath, strictly observed, the Jews would not pull the man out. The news reached Archbishop Ernst, who said: "Since the Jews take their Sabbath so seriously that they won't lift a man out of the muck, then it is meet that the Christian Sabbath hold equal sway." Therefore, the Archbishop forbade raising the man out of the sewer on Sunday. The Jew thus had to stay until the third day, when he was pulled out.][84]

The Protestant theologian Johann Huldrich Ragor (1534–1604) translated Manlius's version into German, embellishing the text, as the authors in this survey have done. What strikes our attention is a dual reference to Jewish pride in the holiness of the Sabbath day, a high opinion that Ragor believes is inordinate. Jews consider that day, Ragor says, to be splendid and great, the implication being that its high station in their theology is negative. In Ragor's rendering, Archbishop Ernst says: "Dieweil die Jüden jren Sabbath also hoch halten, das sie keinen Menschen herauß ziehen wolten, so were es billich und recht, das die Christen ihren Sabbath oder Sontag gleicher gestalt und massen hoch hielten und ehreten." ["Since the Jews hold their Sabbath to be too exalted as to permit rescue [on that day], it is only appropriate that the Christians hold their Sabbath in like high regard …"].[85] Here, as with Melanchthon, Archbishop Ernst forbids Christians from rescuing the Jew from the sewer, since it was the eve of the Christian Sabbath. Had Ernst not issued this prohibition, so the logic of the text goes, the Christian bystanders would have helped pull the Jew out of the excrement. The motif of the compassionate intervention of Christians is intended to contrast Christian charity with the Jews' lack of fellow-feeling, expressed through the rigid dictates of their Sabbath.

84 Johannes Manlius, "Tertium praeceptum," *Locorum communium collectanea* (Basel, 1562), II: 40.

85 Johannes Manlius, "Das Dritt Gebot," *Locorum communium collectanea*, trans. Johannes Huldrich Ragor (Frankfurt a/M: Feyrabend et Huterus, 1566), no pagination. See also *Loci Communes Manlii das ist Herrliche Schöne Historien Allerley Seiten unnd neuwen Exempel* (Frankfurt/M: Feyrabend et Huterus, 1574), p. 37.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

Archbishop Ernst is again the authority when Melanchthon's pupil, Johann Baumgart (also Pomarius), a resident of Magdeburg, retells our fable in his chronicle published in that city, *Summarischer Begriff der Magdeburgischen Stadt Chroniken* (1587). Baumgart cites Manlius as his source:

> Bey dieses Ertzbischoffs zeiten … sol sichs begeben haben das ein Jude an einem Sonnabend welchs der Jüden Sabbath ist in eine Cloacam oder heimlich gemach gefallen. Weil aber ihn die Jüden an ihrem Sabbath nicht heraus ziehen wolten damit ir Sabbath nit entheiligt würde befahl der Ertzbisschoff das man in auch an folgendem Sontag als der Christen Sabbath nicht heraus brengen [sic]solte damit derselbige nicht geringer denn der Jüden Sabbath geachtet würde. Also muste der arme Tropff zwene tage in der stanckgruben stecken.
>
> [During this archbishop's tenure … it is said to have happened that a Jew fell on a Saturday (the Jew's Sabbath) into a privy, or a private space. Because Jews, unwilling to violate their Sabbath, would not pull him out, the archbishop gave the order that he remain through the following Sunday. The Christian Sabbath (he said) should be honored no less than the Jewish Sabbath. Thus, the poor devil had to stay for two days in the stinking pit.][86]

Just prior to relating the Jew in the Latrine, Baumgart comments on the expulsion in 1493 of Magdeburg's Jews. Eager to maintain the reputation of Archbishop Ernst, he lauds the prelate for not having confiscated their possessions or wealth. The final disposition of these valuables is a blank spot in the text, however. Baumgart writes:

> Umb dise zeit … eiferte Erztbisschoff Ernestus hefftig wider die Jüden ließ auch dieselbigen … außtreiben nam aber nichts von ihren gütern. Er hat auch das Jüdendorff in der Sudenburgk Magdeburgk gelegen zerstöret. Und ward das Mariendorff wider an die stedte gebawet welchs one zweiffel von S. Marien Capellen die daselbst der Ertzbisschoff in die Ehre der Jungfrawen Marien gestifftet …
>
> [Around this time … Ernst took zealous measures against the Jews. He had them … expelled – but took nothing of their possessions or wealth.

86 Pomarius, *Summarischer Begriff der Magdeburgischen Stadt Chronicken*, no pagination (see our note 46).

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

> He also destroyed Judendorf. On its foundations, Mariendorf [Mary's village] was built, named after St. Mary's Chapel, founded by the archbishop in honor of the Virgin….][87]

Baumgart next makes a chilling reference to a lost Jewish community in Magdeburg and vicinity, mentioning the cemetery (which dated from the thirteenth century) and the sole witness to Jewish life that remained after the expulsion – Hebrew lettering hewn into stone on buildings (*steine mit Hebreischen Buchstaben*).

We cite a final version of the Jew in the Latrine under the influence of Melanchthon. Nikolaus Selnecker (1530–1592), professor of theology who had studied under Melanchthon, employs the fable to censure Jews for excessive adherence to the regulations of Shabbat. Selnecker, Thomas Kaufmann explains, had "made a name for himself as an opponent of the Jews."[88] Kaufmann continues: "In 1577 [Selnecker] edited a collection of Luther's late Jewish writings, and his letter to Josel von Rosheim, in which he opposed granting Jews the right of transit through Saxony … [Selnecker] also included in the collection a catalogue of testimonials documenting and condemning the daily blasphemies of the Jews against Christ and Mary. Selnecker warned Christian heads of households that their families were forbidden any contact with Jews … The Jews, he said, were to be tolerated as little as the Devil or the Turks, to whom they were betraying Germany. He also sounded warnings against Jewish converts [as] villains."[89] In another venue, Kaufmann alludes to the Jew in the Latrine, which he labels a "malicious little narrative" (*gehässiges Märlein*).[90] Selnecker inserts the story at the end of his polemical introduction to the aforementioned Luther volume, a collection popularly known as Luther's "Jewish Writings" (*Judenschriften*), where it stands as the summation and negative example of the Jewish observance of the Sabbath:

> Zu Magdeburg ist vor etlichen Jaren ein Jüd am Sonnabend welchs der Jüden Sabbat ist in ein Cloack gefallen. Da sind die andern Jüden so abergleubisch vnd auff ihre Gesetzte so halsstarrig gewesen das sie auch die natürliche liebe hindan gesetzt vnnd schlechts die weltlichen Obrigkeit

87 Ibid., no pagination. Baumgart places this passage in the section "Maximilianus Keyser." See Erhard, "Das Judendorf bei Magdeburg," 318–329.

88 Thomas Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews. A Journey into Anti-Semitism*, trans. L. Sharpe and J. Noakes (Oxford: Oxford University Pess: 2017), 27.

89 Ibid., 127–128.

90 Thomas Kaufmann, *Konfession und Kultur. Lutherischer Protestantismus in der zweiten Hälfte des Reformationsjahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2006), 142.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

> vnter den Christen gebeten das die Christen wolten den armen Schelm der ins Gemach gefallen herauszeiehen damit er beim leben bliebe. Denn inen wolte nicht gebüren das sie auff irem Sabbat hand anlegen vnd arbeiten solten. Darauff hat die Obrigkeit des orts recht geantwortet das ire Leute den Sabbat der Jüden nicht solten verhindern noch einige eingriff thun Möchte derwegen der Jüd den Sabbattag im gemach gedult haben. Da nu des andern tags die Jüden iren Gesellen wollen retten spricht der Richter zu inen Gestern ist ewer Sabhat gewest, nu aber ist heut unser Sabbatt Darumb lassen wir euch heut nicht nach das ir unsern Sabbattag brechen oder verhindern wollet. Hat also der arme Jüd bis auff den Montag im schlamm sitzen müssen bis ihn die andern Jüden am dritten tag erlediget haben.
>
> [Some years back in Magdeburg a Jew fell into a sewer on a Saturday, the Sabbath of the Jews. There the other Jews were so superstitious and stubborn about their precepts that they set natural affection aside and quickly begged the Christian civil authorities to extract the poor rogue, fallen into the muck, thereby saving his life. They [the Jews] dared not raise a hand or perform labor on the Sabbath. The authorities of that place rightly answered that Christians should not interfere in any way with Jewish observance of the Sabbath. Therefore, the Jew in the excrement ought to patiently endure his time there. Then, when on the next day the Jews sought to rescue their comrade, the overlord spoke thusly to them: "Yesterday was your Sabbath. Today is our Sabbath. We will not permit you to interfere with our holy day." The poor Jew thus had to sit in the mire until Monday, waiting for the other Jews to rescue him on the third day.][91]

Selnecker's lengthy version of the Jew in the Latrine rivals any in its assault on the laws governing Jewish Sabbath observance. He levels no fewer than three

91 Nikolaus Selnecker, "Vorrede," in: M. Luther, (Leipzig, 1577) https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10194149_00021.html On Selnecker and the Jew in the Latrine, see Ruth von Bernuth, "Zu Gast bei Nikolaus Selnecker. Der jüdische Konvertit Paulus von Prag in Leipzig," *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts. Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook*, 13 (2014), pp. 15–16. See also Andreas Pangritz, "Martin Luther und die Juden. War Luther ein Antisemit?" in: *Blickpunkte. Materialien zu Christentum, Judentum, Israel und Nahost. Die Schattenseite des Reformators. Martin Luther und die Juden. Sonderausgabe 2014*, p. 58. Luther's *Judenschriften* are treated in: *Martin Luthers "Judenschriften:" Die Rezeption im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jarry Oelke, et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

serious charges in a single utterance: "The other Jews were so superstitious and stubborn about their precepts [regarding the Sabbath] that they set natural affection aside." Superstition, stubbornness, and the absence of natural affection; each is an anti-Jewish canard, intended to affirm that Jews cling to an irrational and outmoded belief. Selnecker's argument is that the prohibitions of the Jewish Sabbath exhibit pernicious legalism and inhibit any measure of human compassion.

The first of these defamations, superstition, refers both to the general tenets of Judaism and to specific practices that Christians perceive as bordering on the supernatural.[92] Selnecker's second charge is intransigence. In making this claim, he re-frames a calumniation employed by Christian authors to malign those Jews unwilling to convert to Christianity. Here Selnecker uses obstinance to denigrate Jews for upholding the laws regulating their Sabbath. Third, his phrase "natural affection" (*natürliche liebe*) has a long tradition in theology and natural law.[93] The topic of natural affection is vast and takes us too far afield in the present inquiry. Suffice it here to state that Selnecker's readers

92 See Yaacov Deutsch, "A View of the Jewish Religion. Conceptions of Jewish Practice and Ritual in Early Modern Europe," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 3 (2001), 273–95 at 284: "(Christian works suggest) that Judaism is a ridiculous and superstitious religion … For the authors who underline the superstitious character of Judaism almost anything could be seen as superstitious … for example the customs of *kapparot* and *tashlikh* (a custom that involved throwing one's sins away into water on the first day of Rosh Hashanah) but also pertaining to customs that were accepted by all Jews and were based directly on the Biblical text, such as the custom of the four species used on Succoth." See also, Joshua Trachtenberg, "The Legend of Jewish Sorcery," in: *Jewish Magic and Superstition. A Study in Folk Religion* (New York: Atheneum, 1984), 1–10; and "The Jew as Sorcerer," in: *The Devil and the Jews. The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1993), 57–155.

93 See, for example, Annabel S. Brett, *Changes of State. Nature and the Limits of the City in Early Modern Natural Law* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), p66–68. J.A.O. Preus, in translating Melanchthon, defines natural affection as "the movement rooted by God in the human heart, in conformity with the Law of God, such as love toward parents, children, wife, brothers, and those who deserve well." Cited in: *Philip Melanchthon, The Chief Theological Topics. Loci praecipui theologici 1559*, second English edition (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 517. Related forms of natural affection are the *amor naturalis* of Thomas Aquinas (indebted to Dionysius), cited for example in *Summae Theologiae Prima Secundae*, q.26, a.1–3, *Opera omnia* (Rome, 1882); and the *affectus humanitatis* of John Calvin, as found in *Joannis Calvini Commentarii in Isaiam prophetam* (Geneva, 1551): VI: 11. Regarding the Thomistic perspective on natural love, see, Angelo Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005), 327–328.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

were familiar with this type of human devotion from the writings of Luther,[94] Melanchthon[95] – and Selnecker himself.[96] Both Melanchthon and Selnecker choose the Greek word *storgē* (στοργή) as the closest equivalent to *natürliche liebe*.[97] An established category of love, *storgē*, divinely ordained, is most characteristic of the affection between parents and children. But it extends to kinship in the widest sense of the term.

When the dictates of natural affection are applied to the Jew in the Latrine, Selnecker wishes his readers to see that the Jewish community falls far short of the ideal. Instead of committing an unselfish act of kindness which one might extend to a sibling, the Jews standing outside the sewer abandon a fellow Jew, allowing him to wallow – and perhaps to perish – in a dangerous pool of excrement.[98] Describing this behavior, Selnecker says that "the other Jews," superstitious and stubborn in their practices, "set natural affection aside." Selnecker bases his critique on the New Testament, which twice holds the phrase *sine affectione* (Cf. Greek: *astorgos/*(ἄστοργος)), the equivalent to the concept of the absence of natural affection. Both references are framed in starkly negative terms. Those without natural affection are self-loving sinners who reside far outside the Christian community. The first reference appears against the backdrop of God's anger over human transgression. The Apostle Paul enumerates the vices of ungodly and unrighteous men who have no natural affection (Romans 1:31). And the second passage concerns morally reprehensible behavior during the Last Days, a foretelling of wickedness to come.

94 Martin Luther, "Ein Sermon von dem ehelichen Stand. 1519," in: *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimarer Ausgabe) (Weimar : Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 2000–), II, 167.

95 Philip Melanchthon, *Philosophiae moralis epitome*, 20.

96 Nikolaus Selnecker, PAEDAGOGIAE || CHRISTIANAE, PARS || PRIMA.Vnterweisung in den || Heubtstuecken der gantzen Christlichen || Lehre/nach ordnung des heiligen || Catechismi (Leipzig, 1569), p. 97.

97 See, for example, Philip Melanchthon, "Vom göttlichen Gesetz," *Heubtartikel Christlicher Lere: im latin genandt, Loci Theologici* (Wittenberg, 1553), CII. Brett, *Changes of State*, 67, comments on Melanchthon, who "gave a positive role to natural affections in our behavior towards others. He called them by the Greek name, *storgai phusikai*, and held that they 'move us without respect to profit [*utilitas*] and pleasure, as a father loves his children not for the sake of his won profit.' *Storgē* more generally was an inherited Stoic notion of a natural love towards others." See, Nikolaus Selnecker, "Quartum Praeceptum," in: *Paedagogia Christiana* (Frankfurt/M: Braubach, 1565), pp. 105ff. See, also, Melanchthon," Postilla Melanthoniana," in: *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, XXIV: 267.

98 Selnecker and the other German authors of the Jew in our study stress that the victim's stay in the sewer on the Sabbath is due more to the wish of his fellow Jews than to the man himself. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer of this article for pointing out this tendency.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

One sign of said wickedness is the lack of natural affection (2 Timothy 3:3). In using the phrase "setting aside natural affection," Selnecker invites his readers to equate the sinners of the New Testament with the Jews of our anecdote. Both groups of transgressors breach the divine and natural obligation to show loving kindness to kin. They therefore commit a crime against their (human) nature, thus rendering themselves inhuman.

There could be no harsher epitaph. With it, the German early modern exegesis of the Jew in the Latrine draws to a close. Subsequent authors credit Krantz, Münster, and others, attempting to affirm the dense German record rather than to break new ground.[99] A backward glance elicits wonder that so much commentary derives from so few lines of text. But clearly the Jew in the Latrine touched a theological nerve, generating centuries of Christian reaction and unease.

A recent anthology identifies the Jew in the Latrine as one of the "comic tales" of the medieval period.[100] To challenge the word "comic" in this instance is to fail to recognize that some readers perceived it to be humorous. Among those finding the tale amusing were early Protestant theologians, for whom it became a proof-text for the supposed blind adherence of the Jews to the Law. For German authors, the tale encapsulates in a few lines what thousands of words of Christian theological writings attempt to do: expose (in the crassest terms) the state of Jewish belief, rife with smells and excrement, and clinging to an outmoded ethical system which, in its rigidity, has no room for the new, Christian moral scaffolding. Readers may smile, or laugh, at the fate of the poor wretch trapped in the sewer, but his story has pedagogical intent. Both Sabbaths are present in the little story, but the second of these, the Christian Sabbath, holds pride of place. It supposedly brings with it a natural affection which, in the spirit of Christ and St. Paul, triumphs over ceremonial legalities, however, venerable. For an obsolete ethic, and ancient ethos, the Jew in the Latrine is representative.

99 See, for example, Heinrich Bünting, *Braunschweigische vnd Lüneburgische Chronica* (Magdeburg, 1584), p. 99; Sigismund Hosmann, *Das schwer zu bekehrende Juden-Herz, nebst einigen Vorbereitungs-Mitteln zu des Juden Bekehrung* (Celle, 1699), 18; Johann Vulpius, *Magnificentia Parthenopolitana* (Magdeburg, 1702), 297; and Boysen, *Allgemeines historisches Magazin* (our note.52).

100 Marc Wolterbeek, *Comic Tales of the Middle Ages. An Anthology and Commentary* (New York: Greenwood, 1991), 71, includes the tale in his chapter, "*Nugae*. The Trifles of Learned Latin Poets."

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge

Acknowledgements

I owe a profound debt of gratitude to the esteemed Hartmut Geißler of the Historischer Verein Ingelheim for consultation on this manuscript. He translated passages from Latin and generously shared his expertise on Sebastian Münster, among other authors. Mistakes that remain are mine. I recognize, too, the assistance given by Prof. Gregory Hays, Prof. Anthony Bale, Prof. James Ogier, Dr. Dietlinde Munzel-Everling, Travis From, and Andrew Merritt, M.A. Thanks are also owed to the outside reviewers, who offered penetrating comments and made this paper stronger. The English translations in this essay, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

Downloaded from Brill.com09/05/2022 05:56:37PM
via University of Cambridge